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News. Clues. Kingdom views.

CHRISTIANCOURIER



Recession and recovery: Are we there yet?

Chandra Pasma

Now that we've passed the halfway point of the year, it's a good time to ask: How is that recovery coming along?

Statistics reveal a mixed bag – some improving trends, and some discouraging ones. Overall, the picture is less robust than headlines about economic recovery would suggest. GDP may be growing steadily, but recovery has yet to trickle down to those who suffered most from the recession – the poor, the economically vulnerable and the unemployed.

It is also important to note that the recession didn't impact all of the provinces equally. Alberta, Ontario, and British Columbia were particularly hard hit. However, all of the provinces had to contend

with economic challenges and growth in poverty.

Unemployment & Employment Insurance

Unemployment has improved slightly in 2010, since peaking in August of 2009. Currently though, 1.4 million Canadians are officially unemployed.

Statistics Canada will proudly tell you that enough new jobs have been created to equal the number of jobs lost during the recession. Sadly, what the headlines don't show is that nearly a fifth of these new jobs are only part-time; we still have a deficit of 149,300 full-time jobs. This continues an ongoing trend to precarious work, which already before the recession constituted 1 in 3 jobs in Canada.

667,400 unemployed Canadians received regular EI benefits in April. This is a decline since the peak in June 2009. However, the numbers show that there are 830,900 unemployed Canadians not receiving EI.

Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia

Alberta, Ontario and British Columbia were hit the hardest of all the provinces. Half the total number of jobs lost in Canada were lost in Ontario. Proportionally, Alberta lost more of its economy, and British Columbia comes in third with job losses.

However, despite the fact that job losses were heavily concentrated in these three provinces, they had the lowest Employment Insurance



coverage in the country. In all three provinces, less than 50 percent of the unemployed qualified for EI benefits.

Not surprisingly, then, Alberta, Ontario and BC also had the highest increases in social assistance caseloads in the country. *The unemployed need a*

source of income – if they can't get unemployment benefits, they must live off of savings and credit or turn to social assistance. The failure of Employment Insurance thus directly contributed to the surge in social assistance cases in these provinces.

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Michaëlle Jean's heart for Haiti

Emily Wierenga

After five years of serving as Canada's 27th Governor General, Michaëlle Jean is transferring the dignity and grace which have given her a household name into a new role – that of the United Nations' Special Envoy to Haiti.

"It is with great passion, conviction and enthusiasm that I have agreed to take on this important mission, which fits in perfectly with the people-to-people diplomacy I have practiced throughout my term," Jean stated publicly on June 22. This September, the Haitian refugee who succeeded Adrienne Clarkson as the Queen's representative will



step down to make way for the

newly appointed David Johnson. Johnson, a 69-year-old Harvard alum, called the appointment a "mark of confidence that touches me profoundly."

While touted by Prime Minister Stephen Harper as representing "the best in Canada," Johnson's career has not been without controversy. His involvement as independent adviser in the Airbus affair – a scandal involving Johnson's former employer, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney – called the legal scholar's impartiality into question. Nevertheless, Johnson says he's striving to follow the "fine example" which his predecessors, from Samuel de Champlain to Jean,

have set before him.

A genuine Governor General

Jean's footsteps are large, indeed. "Here is this beautiful young Canadian of Haitian birth," as national columnist John Ibbitson puts it, "with a smile that makes you catch your breath, with a bemused older husband by her side, and a daughter who literally personifies our future, and you look at them and you think: Yes, this is our great achievement; this is the Canada that Canada wants to be; this is the Canada that will ultimately make way for different cultural identities."

Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff described Jean as having "heartfelt warmth and kindness [which have] touched so many in Canada and abroad."

Fluent in five languages, the renowned journalist and broadcaster is a hero in her hometown of Port-au-Prince and in the seaside town of Jacmel, where she spent much of her childhood. At age 11, Jean and her family fled to Quebec after her father was arrested, jailed and tortured by Haitian Dictator Francois Duvalier. There, she lived in the town of Thetford Mines until her parents' divorce, following which

See Haiti on page 2

News

Are we there yet? *continued*

In Alberta, Income Support Assistance cases rose a whopping 42.7 percent over the course of the recession. Ontario Works cases increased by 23.1 percent, while BC Employment and Assistance cases went up 20.3 percent. People living on social assistance are living in poverty, as no province provides a welfare income that reaches the poverty line.

This rise in unemployment, poverty and economic security had a heavy cost for these three provinces. They saw the highest increases in bankruptcies, with bankruptcies in Alberta rising an astonishing 82.2 percent. They were also among the top five provinces

for year-over-year increases in food bank use, with Alberta once again topping the list at 61 percent. Alberta, Ontario and BC truly bore the brunt of the recession.

Manitoba and Saskatchewan

But while other provinces were not hit quite so hard, the economic picture was not necessarily rosy for them. Manitoba and Saskatchewan, for instance, escaped with employment relatively unscathed. However, they still had the fourth and fifth highest social assistance caseload increases in the country. This was partly because these provinces had extremely low

EI coverage, with less than half of the unemployed receiving benefits.

All four provinces experienced a steep increase in the cost of living. As a result, Nova Scotia had the second highest increase in food bank use in the country, rising 20 percent. Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick were fourth and fifth for increases in the bankruptcy rate while Newfoundland and Labrador were still experiencing a rise in bankruptcies into 2010.

Quebec

Quebec in many ways fared relatively well during the recession in terms of job loss, food bank use, Financial Assistance caseloads and bankruptcy. However, Quebec's poverty rate was one of the worst in the country before the recession began. The recession has, unfortunately, only served to exacerbate that trend. For instance, while the increase in social

assistance cases was relatively low, Quebec still had the highest absolute number of cases, beating larger neighbour Ontario by a solid 100,000 cases. This leaves Quebec with a significant poverty challenge as it recovers from the recession.

vencies are declining, they remain high. Recovery is not reaching all Canadians.

The one bit of good news is that cost of living has been easier on family budgets, as food prices and rent have been in line with inflation or lower.

Still, there is more to be done. Despite all the talk of austerity at the G8 and G20 meetings, the government needs to be careful of ending the stimulus funding and cutting the deficit too soon and too fast for fear of provoking another recession. And more needs to be done to help those Canadians still feeling the effects of the last recession. Congratulating ourselves on our robust economic recovery because GDP is growing is meaningless, unless we pay attention to those who are still waiting for recovery.

Chandra Pasma is a policy analyst with Citizens for Public Justice. For more information on the recession and its impact, check out www.cpj.ca/bearingthebrunt.

Heart for Haiti *continued*

she moved with her sister and mother to Montreal.

After receiving a number of university degrees, Jean worked for Radio Canada and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), in addition to helping victims of domestic violence.

Familiar with hardship and prejudice, Canada's first black Governor General has spent much of her adult life advocating for youth, women and minorities, as proven by her controversial decision to snack on a raw piece of seal's heart during a visit to Nunavut in 2009.

Married to Canadian filmmaker Jean-Daniel Lafond, Jean is the adoptive mother to Marie-Eden, an orphaned child from Jacmel. "I've never experienced so much love as the day she was presented to me," Jean told Donna Tranquada of *Homemakers.com*. "It was done with such dignity. Marie-Eden is a gift. I see myself as someone who's accompanying a child through life and it's always surprising, always an incredible challenge."

Highlighting minorities

By loving the nation's young, Jean has revolutionized the largely ceremonial role of Governor General. As 16-year-old Natascia



Zuccarelli-Pegoraro of Mississauga, Ont. wrote in *The National Post*, "Jean... promotes kindness, strength, and an international reputation for goodwill. . . . She is a motivator of young people, and a true image of what it is to be a Canadian."

During her tenure, Jean prioritized the plight of female victims of violence by meeting regularly with both national and international women's organizations. She also focused on nurturing relations between people of all racial, linguistic, cultural and gender groups.

The latter was evidenced in a recent visit to Timmins' Native Friendship Centre, where, in spite of being pressed for time, she

paused in the middle of her speech to comfort a distraught child. "Look at all the beautiful children in this room," she told the First Nations group. "This is really what the country is all about."

In order to continue assisting the under-privileged, the 53-year-old has established The Michaëlle Jean Foundation, an organization focused on reaching youth in northern and rural communities through the arts.

"The Michaëlle Jean Foundation will seek to support Canada's many social and cultural actors, especially youth-serving and youth-led organizations, engaged across the country in constructive civic activities," Jean declared in a media release. "Through creativity and artistic expression, these myriad stakeholders are reaching out to strengthen and consolidate Canada's social links."

Jean's new position as Special Envoy to Haiti for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is one that will allow her to bring hope to her home-country.

"Her main goal will be to fight poverty and boost literacy rates," according to *The Globe and Mail*. "She will also aim to raise international funds for the nation, which was all but shattered by an



Workers rebuild the destroyed College St. Jean l'Evangeliste in Port-au-Prince.

earthquake in January."

Jean is famous for her emotional response to Haiti's disaster. "The images and news reports [were] unbearable to watch," she stated, following the 7.0 quake. "So much distress, suffering and loss. We [were] also, of course, imagining the worst, situations no image can capture, that only increase our feeling of helplessness." Jean's heart for Haiti inspired Prime Minister Stephen Harper to push for her new position. "As UNESCO Special Envoy, Michaëlle . . . will draw upon her unique experience and dedication to Haiti, as well as her commitment to educational and cultural initiatives," Harper said in

a public statement.

"She will be in a position to further advance the international community's response to the urgent needs in Haiti as it recovers from January's devastating earthquake. The appointment is also a tribute to Canada's leadership role in rebuilding Haiti."

Emily Wierenga is an author, artist and freelance writer who lives with her husband and son in Neerlandia, AB. For more information, please visit www.emilywierenga.com.



News

Short-sighted decision on green energy projects

Nathan Stevens

The Ontario Power Authority took the July long weekend to make an announcement that undermines the government's commitment to green energy in this province. Simply put, the price of ground-mounted solar projects is being reduced from 80 cents to 58.8 cents per kilowatt-hour produced. The Ontario Power Authority has failed to grasp the depth of the negative impact this decision has on promoting green power to farmers in this province and making Ontario the heart of green manufacturing.

The issue isn't one of whether the price of 80 cents or 58.8 cents is the right price for ground mounted solar. It is reported that this change will save a billion dollars for consumers over a 20 year period. When you take the time to do the math, a billion dollars spread among seven million working people in the province over 20 years, the cost is less than five large Tim Horton's coffees each year. Is undermining the development of this new industry worth that small a price?

On the other hand, there are a number of farmers and other investors that chose to submit applications and to go ahead and get their solar power panels installed without a conditional contract in place. This may have been jumping the gun on a major financial decision, but these people believed that our government was firm in its direction to promote green energy development and the Mirco-fit program. That their trust in our provincial government is shaken is an understatement, to say the least.

The decision to change the rate and potentially impact 11,000 applications waiting for approval with no warning is a blow to investor confidence and trust in government. Those considering a green energy project need to reconsider doing so for fear the price will fall again at an unexpected moment. Green businesses looking at Ontario as an investment opportunity will reconsider our government's commitment to any program that encourages new technology.

Moving forward, at the very least, the Ontario Power Authority needs to honour the remaining 11,000 applications that applied in good faith in the program, with the rate established when the application was made. After that, if a reduction in the feed-in tariff is necessary to achieve a fair price that better reflects the costs and returns of the projects, so be it. That rate may be 58.8 cents, or it may be 80 cents, or something in between. But at least new investors will be able to make an assessment of the project's viability at the new price. ➤



Nathan Stevens is the Research and Policy Advisor for the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario. The CFFO Commentary represents the opinions of the writer and does not necessarily represent CFFO policy. It can be heard weekly on CKNX Wingham and CFCO Chatham, Ontario and is archived on the CFFO website: www.christianfarmers.org. The CFFO is supported by 4,300 farm families across Ontario.

UNICEF criticized for sponsoring promiscuous children's television program

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (CNA) – Salvadoran columnist Julia Regina de Cardenal has denounced UNICEF for sponsoring a television program that promotes unethical behavior and promiscuity to children.

"Why are international organizations obsessed with investing such sums of money to pervert our children?" she asked in a column for the Salvadoran daily, Hoy. As an example, Cardenal pointed to the money spent on advertising during a television program that "promotes promiscuity, prostitution as a way of earning a living for young women, homosexuality and all forms of sexual disorder."

"The grim message to teens is that sex is a game that must be experienced in the search for pleasure, without any concern for the consequences of physical, psychological, mental, spiritual, social and cultural health," she warned.

El Salvador is going through "a frightening and unbearable crisis of violence, terrorism and brutality never before seen," Cardenal continued. For this reason it is crazy and unacceptable that UNICEF – which claims to protect children – is sponsoring a program that is so damaging to society, the family and the dignity of the person."

UNICEF is "not looking at the true needs of Salvadoran children" in the areas of health, nutrition, security and education, she continued, noting that foundations that promote such programs receive no answer when they request financial assistance. "Is there only money available to promote unethical behavior? This is the most destructive thing they can do," she said.

She also criticized authorities for allowing "this kind of perversion on children's television," and encouraged parents to call or write to express their dissatisfaction with the program.

Rousseau's pernicious influence

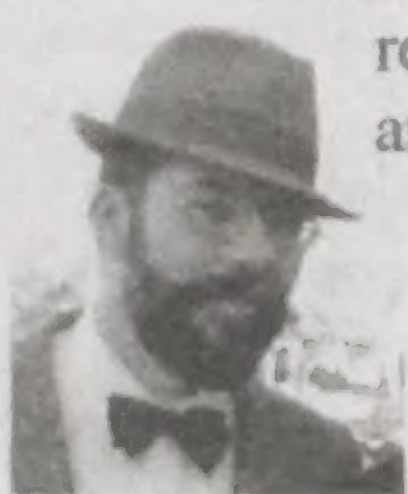
Loyola High School has served the anglophone Catholic community in Montreal since 1896, when it was established as the English-language section of the Collège Ste-Marie. At that time the Roman Catholic Church was the dominant institution in the province, overseeing a variety of endeavours, including hospitals, labour unions, schools and universities. As such, Loyola had a secure place within the established order, articulating the faith, albeit in a different language, held by most Quebecers.

Section 93 of the old British North America Act had provided for the protection of the educational rights of "the Queen's Protestant and Roman Catholic Subjects in Québec." This translated into separate denominational school boards in that province, which the provincial government continued to respect until the end of the twentieth century, when it replaced them with linguistic school boards.

The Catholic faith of most Quebecers did not survive the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, which saw the provincial government move to take over education from the Church. After that time, it increasingly looked on both Protestants and Catholics as somewhat annoying vestiges of a best forgotten past. The new established religion was now a secularism rooted in the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who famously advocated a non-sectarian civil religion to cement the unity of the republic.

Limited tolerance

Writing in the *Social Contract*, Rousseau claims his proposed civil religion to be supremely tolerant but immediately qualifies this with an ominous exception: "whoever dares to say: 'Outside the Church is no salvation,' ought to be driven from the State." Adherents of traditional revealed religions, such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam, are by Rousseau's definition guilty of "theological intolerance" and a threat to the sovereign general



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Principalities & Powers

David T. Koyzis

will. The intolerant cannot be tolerated. Most ordinary people, with their multiple and overlapping allegiances, are simply intolerable from Rousseau's perspective.

Rousseau's influence goes some way in explaining the current Québec government's requirement that all schools, public and private, teach its Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) course, which takes an ostensibly neutral approach to the world's religions. Yet as Fr. Raymond de Souza correctly points out, "[i]n the name of tolerance for all faiths, all faith must be taught to be false from a secular point of view." Loyola High School's administration, committed to the Catholic faith, saw through this pretence of tolerance, correctly perceiving that it endangers Loyola's identity as a Catholic school. How, after all, can a believing Christian be expected to teach that all religions are equally valid when this so obviously conflicts with the tenets of Christianity?

Sign of hope

Loyola requested an exemption from the requirement to teach ERC and offered in its place another course that accomplished the same objectives. The Department of Education, Recreation and Sport denied this request on the grounds that Loyola's course was confessional in nature. Loyola took the matter to Québec's Superior Court, which decided in Loyola's favour two months ago. Justice Gérard Dugré, in the text of his decision, went so far as to call the Department's approach "totalitarian," focusing on the paradoxical nature of its action. "In these times of respect of fundamental rights, of tolerance, of reasonable accommodations and of multiculturalism, the attitude adopted by the Department in the current matter is surprising."

Not really. To those who understand Rousseau's influence in contemporary Québec it can hardly be unexpected. Yet Dugré is perceptive enough to see through the monopolistic pretensions of the Québec government, which is a definite sign of hope in an otherwise secular society. ➤

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Editorials

The new F word: fat



Brett Alan Dewing

"Well, I hope the food's not *that* good." Not many can say they have heard that sentence from restaurant patrons. But I have. From a thin, middle-aged woman walking past the table where my family was seated. While it was seemingly addressed to her companion, the comment was

directed at us and meant to be heard. You see, my family number among the 30 percent of Americans who are labeled obese.

It is no secret that many Americans are overweight. While Canada boasts a much lower percentage of obesity, it's hard to let a country off the hook when the closest thing they have to a national dish is gravy and cheese over fries. No matter where you look, it's clear that our world is full of fat people. Even in the thin-obsessed media, we are constantly reminded that we measure up short (or, er, wide) with endless weight loss advertisements and tabloid close-ups of celebrity cellulite.

But even the media is beginning to catch the drift. This year, a handful of television shows have popped up with rotund stars and often weight-themed concepts. And that's not counting the reality competition shows that measure contestants by weight loss in high-pressure situations.

Fat prejudice?

Yes, these days we're all made hyper-aware of appearance, and weight is the number one factor taken into account. Not only is obesity linked to attractiveness, it is constantly discussed in terms of health and personality. Studies have shown that overweight people are stereotyped as lazy, unhealthy, unsanitary, poor and uncultured. I am not alone in having been waved off by a doctor and told my problem was "too many Big Macs." I didn't even have time to explain to my doctor that I abhor McDonalds and hate sweets before he was out the door.

It is true, of course, that obesity can raise health risks. It is just as true that the extreme skinniness of our media role-models is unhealthy. But more than that, studies now show that the types of responses I have described from my doctor and the woman in the restaurant may be the unhealthiest of all, causing psychological and physical effects that lead to greater weight gain and often depression. Furthermore, wage rates and hiring practices are also often influenced by weight bias.

In a culture of tolerance, fatness has become less and less

tolerable. Movies such as *Shallow Hal* which purport to oppose weight prejudice end up being two-hour fat jokes with tidy morals about inner beauty before the credits roll. Recently, Howard Stern accosted actress Gabourey Sidibe about her size, claiming that she would die in three years if she did not lose weight. And yet others have come to her defence, positing that a person's size does not tell you much about their actual health.

The National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA) encourages a "Health At Every Size" approach with the following principles:

Accepting and respecting the diversity of body shapes and sizes
Recognizing that health and well-being are multi-dimensional and that they include physical, social, spiritual, occupational, emotional, and intellectual aspects

Promoting all aspects of health and well-being for people of all sizes

Promoting eating in a manner which balances individual nutritional needs, hunger, satiety, appetite, and pleasure

Promoting individually appropriate, enjoyable, life-enhancing physical activity, rather than exercise that is focused on a goal of weight loss

NAAFA's website spells out their position on the issue:

"Fat people are discriminated against in all aspects of daily life, from employment to education to access to public accommodations, and even access to adequate medical care. This discrimination occurs despite evidence that 95 to 98 percent of diets fail over five years and that 65 million Americans are labeled "obese." Our thin-obsessed society firmly believes that fat people are at fault for their size and it is politically correct to stigmatize and ridicule them. Fat discrimination is one of the last publicly accepted discriminatory practices. Fat people have rights and they need to be upheld!"

Both sides now

I am in the position to look somewhat objectively at the issue. I have spent half of my life thin and half of it fat. I became overweight in high school, lost the weight in university, and gained it back about five years ago. I have experienced a very large amount of ridicule and persecution for my weight. (It's not easy to be surrounded by stringbean Dutchmen!) And yes, I loved that decade of slenderness, but I was never really happy. During those years, I was obsessed with my appearance. Any of my university friends could tell you the anguish I put myself through over my body image. I felt such pressure from all sides, and I truly developed a warped and unhealthy view of my body. Never did I let the thought of how I looked pass out of my mind. I never felt fatter than when I was thin. It's true. Since gaining weight again, I have often wanted to develop a healthier lifestyle, but I feel so free from the spirit of self-criticism that overwhelmed me before.

And so I find myself aligning with the views of NAAFA. I love the idea of healthcare that is not centred around the idea of weight loss. I want to feel empowered to stand up to that woman in the restaurant. I want to find jeans in my size, even if I intend to one day fit into my old ones. I want to not look back into the abyss of body-hate that can spiral into disorders far deadlier than obesity.

So watch yourself this week. When you see an overweight person, do you make assumptions about them (perhaps that they're American)? Do you feel sorry for them? Do you feel superior, healthier, happier? The truth is that when you see me, you don't see my thyroid and my health-sustaining medication that "may cause weight gain." You don't see my mind, either, my love of learning and the arts, my love affair with vegetables, my dance fever. Often, what you see is a lazy glutton. I am guilty of making the same assumptions (and worse) about others based on their appearance. Remembering my own svelte days, I may look at you and see a self-sexualizing narcissist. But I hope that next time, we're able to put aside our weight prejudices and get to know each other. ✍

The reluctant evangelist



Angela Reitsma Bick

It took a few days to explain "summer vacation" to our five-year-old and to convince her to take it. She thought Senior Kindergarten began the day after Junior

Kindergarten finished. Since 25 of my 31 years have followed the rhythm of a school year, it's hard to imagine summer without holidays. The average Canadian, according to the World Tourism Organization, takes 26 paid vacation days per year, much of it arranged to capitalize on warm weather. Italians, at 42 annual days off, are the world's most accomplished holiday-goers and Americans the hardest-working, getting an average of 13 days of leave each year.

Whether you camp or tour or sail the Caribbean, one thing remains true: the best part of any vacation is coming home. I love returning to beds worn along well-known lines, favourite books within reach and familiar food. Strange variations on those themes sharpen my appreciation for what makes a home.

A similar rubric applies to faith. God's great sacrifice becomes an easy thing to take for granted when I've read eight different children's Bibles aloud in one year. But when I leave the comfort of what's known to explore other beliefs or to explain what I believe, then my appreciation of our church and its centuries-old doctrine is enhanced.

That's the flip side of evangelism: how much it changes the evangelist. When Jonah turns to the Lord, it's almost more satisfying than the dramatic repentance of all those Ninevites. Without sharing the things we believe, it's possible that they'll get as dusty and invisible as knick-knacks on a mantelpiece. Once we see them in contrast, however, once we clarify for a co-worker or teach a child about God's saving grace, then the truth is put in sharp relief again.

'Wish you were here'

A friend from Russia once told me that during the early Communist era, the government tried to save money and increase production by introducing the five-day week. Each day eighty percent of employees worked and twenty percent had the day off. But family members and friends did not share similar schedules, which made social interaction impossible. Machines also broke down more frequently from being used without ceasing. So the idea of continuous production, implemented in 1929, fell out of favour three years later. After some experimentation with a six-day week, the interrupted seven-day week, with Sunday as a shared day of rest was re-established in 1940.

The importance of a communal component to vacations can still be seen today. We are drawn to other people when we mark anniversaries, spend free time or visit new places. If all holidays were solo, they would be much impoverished. And somehow, I think evangelism is the same. The SERVE

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Canada

Letters

A challenge for Prime Minister Harper

The federal government's decision on the controversial \$800 million copper-gold mine in British Columbia will be a precedent for industrial development in Canada, from the use of fresh-water lakes as dump sites for toxic waste to relations with first nations. A final decision will be made by Prime Minister Stephen Harper's cabinet in early September, 2010. How should we deal with this question in the light of God's love and justice in the context of our cultural mandate?

According to Taseko Mines Ltd, Vancouver, B.C., which has already spent \$100 million on this project, building this open mine would create about 375 construction jobs. Afterwards, the same amount of employees will be hired. "All of them would be high-paying jobs," according to Mr. Bill Bennett, B.C.'s Minister of Mines. Most likely, only those who have a higher education will be employed. According to the *Globe and Mail*, the economic gains from this proposed mine in the economically struggling British Columbia Interior outweigh the significantly negative environmental impact, including the destruction of an entire fishing lake. Besides fish and fish habitat, it will also harm grizzly bears and, in particular, the Tsilhqot'ins, first nations Canadians, who have been living there for centuries.

It will be an open-mine project, which will use the entire Fish Lake for the dumping of tailings from the copper and gold processing. Can you imagine? This pristine lake, home to 90,000 rainbow trout, will slowly be choked to death by refuse. The native people of this area, the Tsilhqot'in, have been fishing this lake for generations. These original people are absolutely against this mine and are prepared to defend their territory by whatever means it takes, said their lawyer, Mr. Philip.

Have we forgotten what has happened to our Arctic? For decades non-First-Nations people with the help of the Federal Government, or private financial parties, developed all kinds of mining and other projects up North. Often after they were finished with their projects, they abandoned their former workplaces, leaving it up to local Inuits to clean up the mess. The abandoned projects caused often a lot of ecological harm, until it became so bad that the Federal Government took it over at the expense of you and me, the Canadian taxpayer. We don't want a repeat of this. This open-mine project is good for only about 20 years. A favourable decision for this project will be a precedent for other industrial developments in Canada.

Mr. Jay Nelson, a well-known Woodward lawyer warned, "It is clear that approving the project is an unjustified infringement" of the first nations' rights. "It really calls into question Canada's relationship to our first nations in 2010. It is a defining moment."

Aren Geisterfer
Ottawa, Ontario

Easy over

I am enjoying CC very much. It has become my morning ritual with coffee, toast and eggs. Thankfully you do not publish every day so I still get some work done around here.

Jim Poelman
Sarnia, Ontario

The reluctant evangelist *continued*

team from our church is in Washington, D.C. right now: 15 high-schoolers from Ontario in a group of 2,000 teens, sharing local service work. The teens' spiritual growth in that environment outpaces their accomplishments. We draw strength from hearing about the experiences of others, and – in giving our own testimony – renew an appreciation for the faith of that great cloud of witnesses.

Evangelism sometimes scares me. But I can tell stories.

I can crystallize my belief by passing it on. I can share what God looked like to me when I stood knee-deep in a northern Ontario swamp. I can express God's care for my family through what we found in our mailbox at church one care-worn Easter. I can describe my dream of being held gently in God's cradling hands. The evangelist's appreciation for what God has done sharpens because truth becomes more tangible in the telling. ✕



Washington, D.C. CRC Church.

Deeds minus the cross

There is another side to the story conveyed in the back-page article "Bell Appeals Across America" (CC June 28). Pastor Rob Bell is indeed sought after by many, but I believe it is largely because he gives a message that is not only appealing, but also non-offensive. Being the hands and feet of Jesus are a good thing, but Pastor Bell, like other self-proclaimed Emergent Church leaders (i.e. McLaren and Claiborne mentioned in this article), are big on deeds and the "Social Gospel," but not the Gospel of the Cross of Christ and the need for repentance. The *Nooma* series also bears this message.

In addition, it is well documented that Pastor Bell sees no problem in partnering with any faith and philosophy in order to change or transform the world. Deeds done in love in compassion seem to justify the means. The Lord has another message about unequally-yoked partnerships in 2 Corinthians 6.

Saints, let's be discerning as we check out the "appealing ones" of our day.

Patricia Fisher
Grand Rapids, Michigan

God is not finished yet

Mr. Geisterfer mentions that "Israel has continually claimed to be God's chosen people over against the rest of humanity." (CC May 10) I would come at it from the other side: Are we ("we" being the gentiles) now God's only chosen folk? According to Paul's words in Romans 11, about the wild olive branches grafted into the old tree, the old tree is still the old tree. Paul gives a very important warning not to brag. And according to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we have received God's mercy by God's grace.

Regarding Israel today, what happened in 1948 is still a wonder today. By all thinking, it never should have happened, nor the outcome of the two or three wars that followed. But it did. And as I read Romans 9-11, more things will happen.

Jan Jansma
Port Alberni, B.C.

Stand with Israel

Harry Antonides in his excellent article "Israel Besieged" (CC July 12, 2010) writes: "The Muslim hatred of the Jews is rooted in its religion. But what about the anti-Semitism in the West?"

Kairos, an ecumenical social justice organization of which the Christian Reformed Church is also a member, issued a Palestine Document to all Christian churches in the world. It states that the international community – including religious institutions, individuals, companies and states – should "engage in divestment and in an economic and commercial boycott of everything produced by the occupation." In short, Israel should be economically strangled into surrendering to its enemies. Doesn't this sound like anti-Semitism?

Opposition to Zionism is simply an attempt to hinder the fulfillment of God's Word. "For if the gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings" (Romans 15:27). The reason why Christians should stand with Israel is because Satan attempts to replace Israel as God's chosen nation.

P. Aalhuizen
Burnaby, B.C.

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Reflections

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke

Morning glory

When the first gleaming fingers of sunlight poke through the window, I do not leap out of bed to greet the new day. As much as I love summer, a string of recent problems weighs me down. I want nothing more than to roll over and stay asleep. But I toss and turn and start to consider things like my own insignificance. I wonder if who I am or what I do really matters. I might as well get up.

By the time I reach the kitchen I'm running a mental inventory on the latest of life's frustrations, great and small.

Our hit-and-miss "high speed" Internet usually works in the early morning hours, so I decide to check e-mails while the coffee brews. I read a message from a writer friend of mine. She offers some advice for those of us who struggle today: "Take a good look in the bathroom mirror. Turn on the tap, dip your finger in the water and trace the cross onto your forehead. Let it remind you of the One to Whom you belong."

There's nothing magical there, but it sums up my problem in a nutshell. I am focused on myself and my situation and have forgotten God's promise, "You are mine. I have called you by name."

Not quite Eden

After a quick stop at the bathroom sink, I grab my Bible and a cup of coffee and step onto the front porch. The sun shines through the branches of the red maples, a celestial eye watching over me. Dew shimmers on the grass and weighs down the thick foliage of the soybeans in the front field. A half-dozen spider webs glisten like a deceptively sturdy lace collar wedged between the eaves trough and a cedar bush.

I inhale deeply and savour the fragrance of summer.

A robin perches on the edge of Daniel's sandbox and inspects the lawn for breakfast options. Two goldfinches bicker as they streak past, in a race to see who can reach the top of the spruce tree first. In the cornfield somewhere a blue jay squawks.

I settle into reading my Bible – in the book of Ezra, where the Israelites rebuild the foundation of the temple in Jerusalem. The old men wept because it paled by comparison to Solomon's temple. God's Shekinah glory wasn't there. But the younger generation cheered. Lamentation and celebration blended together to make a noise so loud the two were indiscernible.

I pause from my reading and drink in the wondrous summer morning. Sunflowers, petunias and snap dragons splash colour all around. Beyond the soys, tall corn stalks wave their tasseled heads proudly in the soft breeze. The psalmist's words come to mind, "The lines for me have fallen in pleasant places."

Surely this must be a glimpse of Eden. Like that rebuilt temple, however, it's only a dim copy of the original.

Chores await us

I think of the day's work ahead. We shipped chickens last night and the barns need cleaning. Jack might be able to combine wheat today – well, after he fixes the Gleaner's hydraulics anyway.

Meanwhile, I will muddle along dumping feeder pans, cleaning hoppers and blowing the barns down. I know that sounds like something involving three pigs and an opportunistic wolf. In fact it requires a backpack blower and a respirator mask. It's the agricultural equivalent of dusting the furniture – not very glamorous work. Then again, I suppose neither was rebuilding Jerusalem's wall in Nehemiah's day, one stone at a time and under considerable opposition. Still, Nehemiah knew the Lord's hand was with him.

We're all called to a restoration project, aren't we? We live out the Christian life, one day at a time, often facing huge obstacles along the way. We know, too, God hasn't left us alone. His purpose may be momentarily unclear, but his presence is sure.

I finish my reading, spend time in prayer and then head off to the barns.

As the day ends, just before dark I sit on the porch again, listening to the robin's evening song and the patter of raindrops on the roof. I hear the auger in the distance, as Jack unloads a few wagons full of wheat. My shoulders ache and my feet throb. Most of this morning's problems

remain unresolved. But my heart is strangely content. I'll spend the next few days working in manure. Thanks to the rain, Jack will be right there with me. It's what we're called to do. And what could be more glorious or significant than that? ➤

Heidi Vander Slikke (vanderslikke@everus.ca) lives in Harriston, Ontario.



Just a spoonful of humour

One of my favourite parent-related moments happened just as I was becoming a parent. It was October of 1994, and I was in the Misericordia Hospital of Edmonton awaiting the birth of our first child. My labour was long and hard, and I was getting nervous. The obstetrician was preparing to do a caesarean section, and, after enduring 12 hours of pain, that was the last thing I wanted.

My husband, Ray, was nervous too. He listened quietly as the doctor explained why he was leaning towards surgery, and not so quietly as I insisted that the operation wasn't going to happen. He needed to do something, so he volunteered to run out to the hallway and get me some ice from the ice machine.

Ray is a very supportive husband, and, as he was leaving the room, he turned to me to offer a quick bit of encouragement. He meant to give me a thumbs up, but he was flustered and, without thinking, he shot me the middle finger instead. The look on his face was priceless! Even through my pain and frustration I couldn't help but laugh.

Shortly after (without surgery, thankfully, but with the help of forceps), our son Sean made his way into the world. Little did we know then how important our appreciation of humour would be in the journey of parenthood we were just beginning.

Unexpected cheer

The morning after Sean's delivery, our friend Anita came to the hospital to visit. I was walking down the hallway with the baby in my arms when she arrived. She was immediately overcome with emotion. Peering into our son's bruised, elongated face, she cried, "Oh, look at him. He's so ugly!" We laughed at that too.

Parenting is a tough job; nothing we do can change that fact. But having a sense of humour – and promoting humour in our children – makes the whole parenting process a little less difficult and a lot more joyful. "A cheerful heart brings a smile to your face," says King Solomon in Proverbs 15:13, "a sad heart makes it hard to get through the day." (The Message)

Humour is a wonderful way to relieve stress, especially when it comes to young children. Life with toddlers is full of conflict – repetitive conflict.

Denise Dykstra (dykstras@telus.net) lives in Edmonton, Alberta. She's a writer and mother of five.

From Toddlers to Teens

Denise Dykstra



The same struggles tend to occur over and over again. Sometimes breaking the pattern by saying something completely out of the blue is enough to alleviate the tension.

A couple of days ago I tried this on my four-year-old son. After asking Damien five times to take his pajamas off and put his clothes on, I asked him to take his pajamas off and put his swimsuit on. By his reaction you'd have thought I was the finest comedian in the country! He was delighted – and so was I when he came out of his room two minutes later fully dressed.

Teens need it

A sense of humour can also alleviate tension caused by teenagers. Teens feel emotions so intensely that everyone around them is affected. If parents can find something that makes them laugh instead of cry in the midst of conflict, they'll have an easier time staying sane when their kids are teens. If they can keep their sense of humour intact, they can use it to buffer bad feelings and make difficult situations less uncomfortable.

We have two teenagers in our house right now and we often find ourselves jokingly referring to parenting books when things get tense. "Hold on, I have to look this up," is an example, as is: "The book said you'd say that." Our kids roll their eyes and accuse us of having an unoriginal sense of humour. And maybe we do. But the fun in our comments diffuses the conflict and more often than not we all calm down.

Of course, as parents we have to be careful that our jokes don't get personal. Our goal isn't to ridicule our kids; it's to create good memories and teach them to use humour themselves. In doing so, we hope our kids will develop what King Solomon called a "cheerful heart." Because having a cheerful heart will help them keep life in perspective down the road.

Which reminds me: Sean, it wasn't you Auntie Anita was calling ugly in the hospital. It was your cone-shaped noggin and the salad-tong indents on your face. Thought you should know.... ➤



News & views

CRC chaplain helps stranded cruise ship crew

Angela Reltsma Bick

For seven months, 180 crew members of a cruise ship called the *Palm Beach Princess* were stranded in a floating no-man's land. When the *Princess* went bankrupt last December, passengers complained that their holiday plans were ruined – forced to abandon visions of the on-board theatre, casino, spa and swimming pools. But the crew, mostly Filipino, were in a far worse situation: trapped on board without visas to land in the U.S. If they left the ship, the stranded workers faced deportations, but circumstances weren't much better on board. Without pay, the crew's food supplies ran low and conditions

slowly deteriorated.

Ocean Development owns the fifty-year-old *Palm Beach Princess*; it filed for bankruptcy in January after cash-flow problems from having to pay tugboats to pull the ship since last September, when the main engine failed. Under bankruptcy laws, the company can only pay workers who remain on the job, a situation that one Miami lawyer calls "involuntary servitude." According to company court filings, the average crew member makes \$175 a week.

Not your typical snow-birds

John Van Hemert is a volunteer port chaplain through Action



International Ministries in Palm Beach, Florida. He and his wife Jean served Christian Reformed



churches across Canada after immigrating to Holland Marsh in the 1950s. Now they've been ministering to the people working on-board the *Princess* for nine years. Van Hemert says that in the first half of 2010, the stranded crew members "endured considerable anxiety, not knowing for many weeks what would happen" to their bankrupt employer. They were not paid and had no money to return home.

Van Hemert recalls leading a church service on-board March 21, followed by an invitation to breakfast. He was given one small piece of egg – all there was. The chaplain prayed with the 22 members of the skeleton crew and walked away with a heavy heart.

He drove to a local grocery store and cried as he described their situation to the store manager. Van Hemert left an hour later with \$250 worth of groceries and a hot chicken dinner, nearly all donated. When he returned to the *Palm Beach Princess* to distribute the food, it was "a delight, the way Sunday should be," he says. With the help of two other volunteers chaplains, Van Hemert continued to support the crew with visits, warm clothes, worship services several times a week, and the loan of cell phones to

call home. Yet he affirms that "the best that we are able to bring is the love of our Lord."

The *Palm Beach Princess* finally got a loan to cover only its operating costs, and so it sailed to Freeport in the Bahamas in April. Van Hemert has tried to keep in touch with the remaining crew members, some of whom may be able to renew their visas in the Bahamas. Many of the original Filipino crew members were eventually taken home by their government, but new crew members kept arriving, most without realizing that Ocean Development remains bankrupt.

In Palm Beach, Van Hemert is working towards establishing a Chaplaincy Center on the coast, to better serve the "strangers at our gates" – those who are truly rootless and far from home. After going through bankruptcy, company neglect, lock-downs, loss of pay, loss of jobs and no way to return home, Van Hemert has seen first-hand how "the hope of and power of the Gospel became the comfort for many broken hearts." ✂

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VAN HEMERT PHOTO

Country living
Maynard van der Galien

Cattle buyer knew your busy times

In the 1970s we sold cull cows to a cattle buyer from Montreal who would come every three months or so and buy directly from dairy farmers. Cecil was Jewish, and he was a determined cattle buyer.

We always knew when he arrived in his big car. He'd toot the horn. He had a lot of territory to cover, and he didn't waste time going to the door. He didn't waste time trying to find you. If you had cows to sell, you dropped what you were doing. If you had nothing to sell, you politely waved and shook your head and he drove away.

I'd much rather take my chances at a sales barn than selling livestock on the farm. But sometimes there was a cow with a lame foot that might not fare well at a sale barn being pushed and bullied by other cows.

Cecil was always looking for these kinds of cows. There was always a lot of dickering before a sale was made. He'd take out his sales pad and show off half a dozen places he'd been to and show what he paid for the cows. The figures were always lower than what my dad and I wanted.

He'd say, "Look, I'm giving you cash money. You don't have any expenses. No trucking and no commission. Why don't you take it? If you send her to the sale barn and she goes down, you'll have nothing."

"I'll pick her up next week. The truck is going right by here. Look at this, I bought three cows from your neighbour." He'd open his sales book again and show the facts. They sure weren't private sales. And so it would go.

When a sale was made he'd reach into his right pocket and pull out a big wad of money. He'd peel off the right amount and hand it over. I was always amazed that cattle buyers in those days carried thousands of dollars in a big roll in their pockets.

This man was able to buy cheap cattle because he paid cash, and farmers didn't have to worry about bad cheques. Paying cash for cattle on the farm has always been a common practice. It was also pocket

money for the farmer. And there was no worry about what might happen to the cow if she went the sale barn route.

Looking back it seemed that Cecil always showed up when we were busy. I don't think he ever came on a rainy day when we had more time on our hands. He came when we were eating lunch or getting ready to milk. He liked to buy when farmers were busy so they didn't have time to dicker on the price.

I remember one spring evening he showed up just as I was busy with milking. He said he needed one or two cows to finish a load that was going directly to the slaughter plant in Montreal.

Could I help him out with a cow or two?

There were two cows that were getting up in years and both had leg problems. I could sell them and make room for heifers that would freshen soon.

Cecil looked at the cows and offered a very measly amount. I said, "No way. I'll send them to the local sale barn in Cobden. I know I'll get a lot more." You had to speak up and be bold when dealing with Cecil.

He was persistent. He upped the offer a little and put his arm over my shoulder. He showed the wad of money. Still I said no to the deal.

"Look it, Maynard," he'd say, "I've bought quite a few good cows from you. I'm going to give you \$250 for that cow ... that's way more than you'll get at the sales barn. But I can only give you \$100 for the other cow. I don't trust her legs. Won't you help me out?"

I didn't sell the cows that spring but put them on pasture for the summer. Their legs were much better by September and the cows looked good.

I sent them to the local sales barn and they brought me almost \$500 each.

It taught me a lesson. Sell cattle when they look good and aren't lame.

And not to Cecil. ✂

Maynard van der Galien

(maynard@renfrew.net) is a retired dairy farmer. He writes weekly and monthly columns.



Church news

Biographer calls Dietrich Bonhoeffer a man of 'staggering' relevance for our time

NEW YORK (CNA) – Discussing his recent and critically acclaimed book on Dietrich Bonhoeffer – the famed Lutheran theologian who was executed by the Nazis in the 1940s for opposing them – author Eric Metaxas called the subject of his biography a man of “staggering” relevance for our time.

The late German theologian is the subject of Metaxas' recent work *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*, which was published in April.

Metaxas reflected on the relevance of Bonhoeffer's life and writings in contemporary society. He noted Bonhoeffer's “extremely pro-Catholic” stance and refuted common misconceptions by “liberal theologians” who have “hijacked” the pastor's writings in support of atheism.



Bonhoeffer

Addressing the significance of Bonhoeffer to the lives of people today, Metaxas believes there are “powerful parallels” between how governments today try to “bully the church on certain issues of sexuality,” as well as “abortion and euthanasia and stem-cell research.” In the same way, he noted, the “Third Reich was bullying the German church at that time.”

“Bonhoeffer's relevance to us today is staggering and I confess that when I began writing the book I had no idea I would stumble over so many powerful parallels to our own situation,” Metaxas told CNA. “For one thing, the story of Bonhoeffer is a primer on the burning issue of what the limits of the state are.”

At the time of Bonhoeffer's Germany, the “state was trying to take over the German church and only a few brave souls like Bonhoeffer were up to the battle. We would do well to take our lead from him in our own battle on that front.”

Although Bonhoeffer was formed by Reformation Lutheranism, he had a passion for the church universal, “beyond the parochial borders of German Lutheranism,” said Metaxas.

“This caused him to ask the larger question: ‘What is the church?’” Metaxas explained. “He would spend the rest of his life answering that question. It was the subject of both his doctoral dissertations and it was what ultimately caused him to stand up against the Nazis who were trying to define the church on their own terms.”

“Bonhoeffer worked on his book *Ethics* while staying at the Benedictine monastery at Ettal in the Bavarian Alps. At the time the monks there were studying an already written work of Bonhoeffer's which would become a landmark book: *The Cost of Discipleship* – and utterly relevant to Bonhoeffer's own life.

Profound misinterpretation

When asked what are the biggest misconceptions that individuals have of Bonhoeffer and how some, particularly atheists, have attempted to use his works to support their stance, Metaxas said, “In my book I write that Bonhoeffer is perhaps the most misunderstood theologian who ever lived. That's because his legacy was hijacked by theological liberals, most notably the ‘God is Dead’ movement of the 1950s and ‘60s, and it has taken until now to begin to seriously set the record straight.”

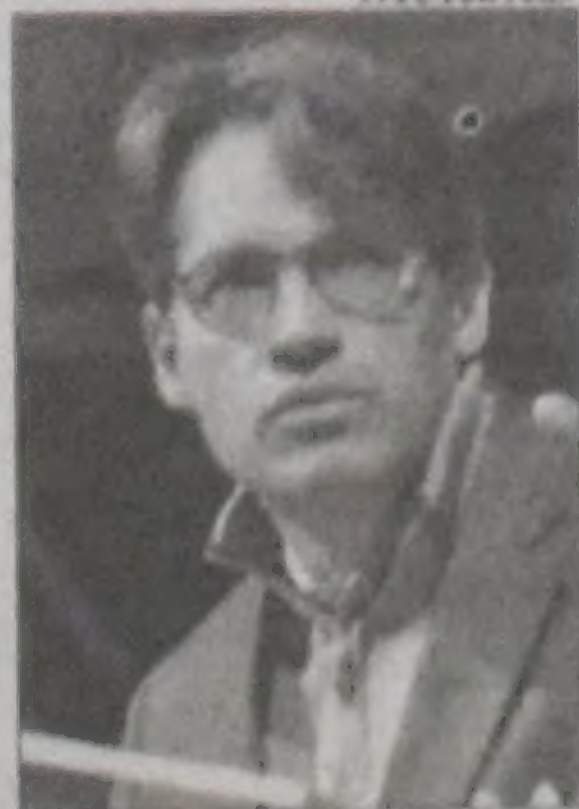
Commenting on the reason for that, Metaxas said that in “a private letter to his best friend [Bonhoeffer] used the phrase ‘religionless Christianity,’ meaning a true Christianity that is not just tradition and church attendance, but the real thing: a life lived in total obedience to Jesus Christ.”

“But this was widely misunderstood as meaning that Bonhoeffer advocated a kind of post-Christian humanism,” he explained. “On the one hand this is knee-slappingly hilarious, because it's the precise opposite of what he actually meant. On the other hand, it's sad, because so many people have gotten the wrong idea about Bonhoeffer from this.”

Ultimately, said Metaxas, Bonhoeffer's life and works merit a revisiting by those in contemporary society, as the theologian has “a certain authenticity about him that is incredibly fresh, that seems to speak to us today, as though he had lived and written ten minutes ago.”

“But I also think that his life was a life of such devotion to Jesus Christ that he is a true Christian hero, one from whom we might all learn many things,” Metaxas noted. “There's something about his life that speaks to us directly, and that gives us much-needed inspiration as Christians, and in a way that is inescapably beautiful and moving.”

Metaxas concluded, “I feel profoundly humbled and privileged to have been able to tell this story to our generation and it's my hope and prayer that it will draw all who read it to a closer walk” with God. ➤



Metaxas

Youth, diversity, immigration, creation care occupy CRC executive's letter to the churches

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – Next year, for the first time, young adult advisers will be appointed to serve at the Christian Reformed Church synod, wrote the executive director of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) in a recent letter to CRC church councils in the U.S. and Canada.

As advisers, young adults will have the chance to speak and have their voices heard on the floor of synod and “future synods will be enriched as these young leaders bring a fresh perspective and new ideas,” said Rev. Jerry Dykstra in the letter that details the decisions made and actions taken by Synod 2010. The letter, including an addendum, described issues faced and decisions made by the 2010 general synod of the CRCNA.

A challenge for the denomination as well as individual congregations in the coming year will be to find ways to increase diversity in leadership roles, Dykstra asserted. “The issue of diversity continues to challenge the church. Synod clearly expressed its desire to increase diversity in leadership roles.”



Another challenge for the denomination and for local churches, Dykstra pointed out, will be to take seriously the issues

of immigration and care for the creation. As for the former, the church will need to educate its “membership about the socioeconomic, political, and security issues facing immigrants and newcomers, and equip them to respond in love and concern to the people groups that God is bringing into our nations,” Dykstra wrote.

On the topic of creation care, he pointed out in an addendum that churches are being asked to recognize and discuss the reality that activities of human beings have had an effect on the Earth.

Therefore the CRC and individual congregations must find ways to remind people: “Our world belongs to God the Creator. The Lord calls us to care for creation faithfully and to use its riches obediently and justly. Human sin has corrupted our ability and desire to care for creation.” ➤

BBC's 'Eastenders' under fire over anti-Christian storyline

LONDON, UK (TCI) – The British Broadcasting Corporation has been forced to defend an “EastEnders” storyline after outraged viewers accused the corporation of anti-Christian bias. The complaints centre around a plotline on “EastEnders” which portrays Lucas Johnson, a Christian Pentecostal pastor, as a deranged killer whose deeds are motivated by his Christian faith.

Viewers have watched the pastor, played by actor Don Gilet, failing to help his ex-wife when she was dying, strangling a love rival to death, and attacking his current wife. Well over 100 viewers have written to the BBC saying that they find the storyline deeply offensive. And the complaints have forced Britain's national network to issue a statement defending their controversial plot.

The statement reads: “Lucas is certainly not intended to be representative of Christians. He is a very damaged and dangerous individual who has created a twisted version of the Christian ‘faith’ in his mind to hide behind and to convince himself that his actions are acceptable.

Obsession

“As the story unfolds, we will see other characters questioning Lucas' claim to be a Christian.

“As Lucas has become increasingly unhinged, his obsession and reliance on the Bible and the scriptures has become increasingly frantic and desperate. This represents this character's emotional breakdown, and it is very clear that this is absolutely not normal behaviour.”

Last year an ex-BBC presenter claimed that the BBC is keen on programs which attack churches, and that there was a wider secularist campaign “to get rid of Christianity.” Don Maclean, the former Radio 2 religious program host, also said that the broadcaster is “keen on Islam.”

Maclean said, “You don't see any programs on Anglicanism that don't talk about homosexual clergy and you don't see anything on Roman Catholicism that doesn't talk about paedophiles. They seem to take the negative angle every time.

They don't do that if they're doing programs on Islam. Programs on Islam are always supportive.”

Fanatical evangelicals?

In June it was revealed that the BBC Trust had rejected complaints against a TV drama that showed a fanatical British Christian beheading a moderate Muslim. The offending episode of “Bonekickers” was aired in July 2008.

The BBC Trust, a group of “independent trustees acting in the public interest,” rejected suggestions that the drama associated fanatical Christianity with evangelicalism and gave an offensive portrayal of evangelical Christians.

Daily Telegraph writer Damian Thompson asserts, “We are deep into the realms of BBC bias and ignorance here. Only a BBC drama series would, to quote the complainant, ‘transfer the practice of terrorist beheadings from Islamist radicals to a fantasized group of fundamentalist Christians.’”

Nutters

In April 2009 Jonathan Wynne-Jones, a national newspaper journalist, warned that the frequent television portrayals of Christians as absurd make it more difficult for believers to defend themselves. Writing on his blog, Wynne-Jones warned that a spate of recent storylines in a number of soaps had sent the clear message that “Christians are nutters.”

In January 2009 a controversial BBC drama depicted a group of pro-life campaigners as violent extremists. The drama, entitled “Hunter,” depicted three pro-lifers kidnapping two children whose mothers had previously undergone abortions. The actress playing one of the pro-life kidnappers bears a striking resemblance to real life pro-life campaigner Josephine Quintavalle, who battled with the BBC in 1997 over the broadcaster's decision to censor a party political broadcast by the Pro-Life Alliance. BBC controller Kate Harward insisted that the show was based on “the day to day detail of the real world.” ➤

Church news

CRWRC sends food, goats to Kenya

Canadian Foodgrains Bank helps pay the bill

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) –What do you do when you rely on your herd of cattle and goats to make a living and there is no water or grass to feed them because of drought? What do you do when this is the third year in a row that you and your community have faced this situation and more than 99 percent of your livestock have already died? These are the tough questions facing thousands of families right now in southwestern and central Kenya, where years of drought have wiped out animal populations and left people with few options for food and income.

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) is responding by distributing food to 4,000 families in eight communities. The distribution began in July and will continue through December. This will be followed up by a goat-restocking project to provide 1,000 families with three goats each. "We are following up on a previous project which included communities in the areas of Isiolo, Narok, and Kajiado, where large numbers of livestock succumbed to the drought in 2009 and where the recent harvest did not yield significant crops," explains CRWRC's Director of disaster response, Wayne de Jong.

The previous project provided relief food to 10,670 Kenyan

households between April and August 2009, and October 2009 through February 2010. The project phased out in February of this year when a successful short rain season allowed 70 percent of families to harvest enough food for their needs. However, the areas of Isiolo, Narok and Kajiado did not have sufficient rains and the harvest did not yield results. In addition to drought, families in those areas have been unable to purchase food because prices have risen 115 percent since 2007.



PHOTO: CRWRC/CRCNA
A Masai man looks after his baby during a food distribution in the Narok/Kajiado region of Kenya in February 2010.

Forgotten area

"The situation in these particular communities has worsened since the previous project ended in February 2010 and livestock herds are taking longer to recover than expected," said de Jong. "So far no other organization has stepped in to provide food, except for a one-time distribution conducted by the [Kenyan] government, which provided only three meals for the month of March."

Together with its local implementing partners, Nazarene Compassionate Ministries Kenya and the Anglican Church of Kenya, CRWRC is providing 1,200 tons of maize, 240 tons of split peas and 72 tons of cooking oil to families in need. In exchange for this food, the families have begun to dig 16 water pans to collect rain water during the rainy season, build two grain banks to use for storing food after future harvests and plant 70,000 trees to help trap future moisture and nutrients in the soil.

Once there is sufficient forage grass available, CRWRC will also distribute 3,000 goats to 1,000 families in the area to help restock the livestock populations. The project will cost about \$720,000, some of which will come from CRWRC's Kenyan partners. The majority of the project will be funded through CRWRC's membership in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Breakup of prayer group outside U.S. Supreme Court prompts complaint, investigation

WASHINGTON D.C. (CNA/EWTN News) – After a group from a Christian school in Arizona was told by a U.S. Supreme Court police officer that they must stop praying outside of the court building because it is against the law, a legal defense fund sent a letter to Supreme Court officials to protest the action. In response, Court officials reiterated the law but said they would investigate.

Near the end of the school year, Maureen Rigo, a teacher at Wickenburg Christian Academy in Arizona, was on an educational tour of the Supreme Court complex with her students and a few adults. At the oval plaza in front of the imposing Supreme Court building they stood off to the side of the bottom of the court steps, bowed their heads and prayed quietly.

The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) says that they were praying in a conversational tone in order to not attract attention and were not obstructing traffic or demonstrating. A

court police officer approached and told them to stop praying in the area immediately. The action was taken on the basis of a statute which bars parades and processions on Supreme Court grounds.

"Christians shouldn't be silenced for exercising their beliefs through quiet prayer on public property," commented Nate Kellum, ADF senior counsel. "The last place you'd expect this kind of obvious disregard for the First Amendment [of the U.S. Constitution] would be on the grounds of the U.S. Supreme Court itself, but that's what happened."

"There is no reason to silence Mrs. Rigo's activities since these activities do not attract attention, create a crowd, or give off the appearance of impartiality," the ADF said in a letter to court officials. The ban on public prayers cannot hope to survive First Amendment scrutiny. Evidently, people may engage in all sorts of conversational expression on Supreme Court grounds unless that expression happens to involve prayer."

Singled out

The organization charged that the action was an example of viewpoint discrimination and that it "singled out and censored religious prayer as the only form of conversation to be silenced."

Patricia Estrada, deputy public information officer for the Supreme Court, told CNA that "the Marshal of the Court will look into the events as described in the letter. The Court does not have a policy prohibiting prayer."

She added, "The Court's policy regarding the use of most public areas at the Court has been to permit activity related to the business of the Court, including traditional tourist activity and ingress and egress for visitors, but not to permit demonstrations and other types of activity that may tend to draw a crowd or onlookers." Citing the law, she noted that it is unlawful "to parade, stand or move in processions or assemblages in the building and grounds, including the plaza and steps, but not including the perimeter sidewalks."

Toronto: Dog receives communion at Anglican parish

TORONTO (CatholicCulture.org) – A dog has received communion at an Anglican parish in Toronto. Pets are permitted in the church.

"The minister welcomed me and said come up and take communion, and Trapper [the dog] came up with me and the minister gave him communion as well," said Donald Keith, the dog's owner. "Then he bent his head and said a little prayer."

"I thought it was a nice way to welcome me into the church," said Keith, a new member; "99.9 percent of the people in the church love Trapper, and the kids play with him."

Following a parishioner's complaint, the local Anglican bishop decided that Trapper would not receive communion again, though he will continue to be welcome at church.

Peggy Needham, the deputy people's warden at the parish, told the *Toronto Sun* that the parish supported Mr. Keith. "The backlash is from just one person. Something happened that won't happen again. Something our interim priest did spontaneously," she said. "This person went to the top and e-mailed our bishop to make a fuss and change things," she added. "But he misjudged our congregation."

Pakistani president orders probe into murder of Christians

FAISALABAD, Pakistan (Dawn.com) – President Asif Ali Zardari asked the authorities in Punjab on July 20 to investigate the murder of two Christian brothers in Faisalabad. Noting media reports about the murder of



two brothers outside a court in Faisalabad the day before, the president called for immediate steps to arrest the culprits.

President Zardari condemned the incident and said it had brought a bad name to the country. He asserted that life of every person is sacred and no-one could be allowed to take law into his own hands. He expressed sympathy for the families of Pastor Rashid Emmanuel and Sajjad Emmanuel, the men who were murdered. And he asked the provincial government to pay suitable compensation to the families.

The brothers, accused of having distributed blasphemous material, were gunned down on the premises of a sessions court in Faisalabad. Police had produced Rashid and his brother in the court to obtain their remand. The brothers were about to leave when they were gunned down. The killing sparked violence in the slain brothers' native area of Daoodnagar, where 10 people were injured.

At around 10 p.m., announcements made from mosques

in Daoodnagar asked local people to come out to 'fight rampaging' Christians. An exchange of fire was reported to have taken place between two groups of people in the area. Later, the authorities imposed Section 144, banning protests and rallies in the district.

Trend of increasing violence

The Pakistani president also took notice of a report about demolition of a temple in Rawalpindi and asked Minister for Minorities Shahbaz Bhatti to investigate the matter and report the factual position. Hundreds of people belonging to the Hindu community took to the streets on Monday against the lessee of the ancient temple who had pulled down half of its structure for commercial purposes.

Muslims of the locality joined the protesters to express solidarity with them and blocked the road for about an hour. The protesters dispersed peacefully when police assured them that the demolition work would be stopped.

Regarding the murdered Christians, the judge, in her adjournment motion, termed the murder a "horrific incident" and stated that international polls had shown "a trend of increasing violence and brutality" towards minority communities in Pakistan. "This is very disturbing and needs to be urgently addressed on the floor of the house," the motion says.

Short Story

Christian Courier is proud to present the runners up in our short story contest!

CC received 12 entries for our short story contest for adults. We were pleasantly surprised by the quality of many of the submissions. For that reason we have decided to publish not only the first- and second-place winners in the next issue, but also the two runners-up in this weeks' issue. We hope you will enjoy these stories as much as we did.

The tree

*At least there is hope for a tree:
If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its
new shoots will not fail.
Its roots may grow old in the ground and its
stump die in the soil,
Yet at the scent of water it will bud and put
forth shoots like a plant.*

Job 14:7-9

Heidi Kerssies

Ella had always loved trees. There was something majestic and mighty about trees, quietly growing against a myriad of odds which might at any moment cut their life short. They had tenacity, persistence, a dogged-determination. They were unassuming, and yet took up so much space. Without any hoopla they could break through the foundation of the tallest building, fell the mightiest man. Power without pretence. Trees were hope, hope that from a tiny seed greatness could grow.

When Ella was born her mother was already tired. Too many children, too little money, too much work. Ella believed she was an inconvenience, a hassle. Her father seemed so often angry and annoyed with her. She learned to be inconspicuous, to take up little space.

"Ella! Ella!! Ella, where are you?" Her father's voice carried across the yard. She heard him calling. He sounded tired.

"Ella, come inside now!" His voice was rising. The word now was loud and harsh, revealing his impatience. Ella suddenly appeared, like she had just grown up out of the ground. Her knees were dirty and scratched, her shirt torn along the hem.

"Where were you?" he asked. She looked down on the ground, rubbed her big toe against the grass.

"In the tree," she quietly answered.

"In the tree? Why are you climbing trees?" He wasn't yelling now. He was looking at her, waiting for her reply. She finally looked up at him, something she seldom did.

"I like trees." She said it so softly he couldn't hear her.

"You like what?" The harshness returned and she returned her gaze to the ground, her toes pushing at the grass once more. He roughly pulled at her shoulder, tugging her toward the house.

"Just come in the house now. Your mama needs you." He wasn't looking at her anymore, just hurrying off muttering something about her thinking she was a squirrel, liking the trees like that. She didn't move for a moment, didn't even take a

breath. She realized that he had heard her after all.

Ella began spending more time in the tree. She felt safe there, in spite of her frequent scratches and occasional falls. It was her sanctuary, her place to simply be. A place unfettered of demands and disappointments, of shouts and sighs and silences.

One morning as she made her way across the yard, her sneakers getting wet from the heavy dew, she heard the screen door open behind her. She turned to look before thinking. He had made his way out the door, his work boots unlaced and still buttoning up his shirt. The screen door slammed shut as he shouted. She didn't hear his words. She watched him as he took a deep breath. And then he exhaled, walked to the wood pile and picked up his axe. His breath came heavy as he chopped the wood. His boots remained unlaced.

Ella sat in the tree and listened to her father chop wood. There was a rhythm to it and it kept her drawn to him, his presence. She felt that he was aggravated by her, that he wanted something from her that she could not give. Just last night he had grumbled that she had no common sense, that she was illogical, although he didn't use that word. He had said, "Why can't you be using the brain in your head?" Everything she did seemed to displease him. The rag she wiped the table with was too wet. Her shoes were always a bit off the mat, in just the place to make him stumble. When she made toast it burnt and left an acrid smell in the kitchen. She spoke too quietly when answering his questions. And she was forever running off to that tree. But she didn't realize that sometimes when he looked at her his eyes softened. And that when he walked past her room at night he touched the door and thought of her, this child of his who liked trees.

When he finally put the axe down the dew had been burned away. She saw him look toward the tree and slowly shake his head.

"Come and stack this wood," he called gruffly as he opened the screen door. "Do it now before it gets too hot." Ella came down and began picking up the wood. Her sneakers kicked at the wood chips as she piled the logs. The logs were rough and splintered. A jagged piece scraped her arm as though the wood were lashing back. This wood once held its place in a mighty tree. Now it lay fragmented and broken. Her eyes were stinging as she finished piling

the wood. She knew it was illogical to feel sad for the tree. She knew it warmed their house in winter. She knew her father chopped wood to care for his family. And yet still her throat tightened and with the back of her hand she wiped her cheek.

It was a Sunday and the air was thick and hot. Ella was sitting in the tree. She heard her father's truck as it made its way down the lane, heading away. The doors had slammed, both in the house and on the truck. Words flew, got caught in the air, before stinging in their landing. Ella's mother was at the screen door, her hands twisting the dish towel.

Ella thought of the moment just before the slamming and the stinging words, the moment when her father's mouth turned and his eyes pained over. He had been talking, strangely enough, about trees.

"They say that in some places people who haven't got no axes or saws get the trees down by yelling at them, that their yelling kills the tree and it falls." Ella looked at him. But from across the room her mother immediately laughed, a harsh laugh. "Now who's talking ridiculous?" Her eyes landed on Ella as she spoke.

Gravel was flung up from the tires as he left. The truck swerved onto the road. He didn't look back. She didn't watch him go. Only Ella watched from the tree. She had run out when she saw her father's eyes cloud, when she saw the surprising gentleness erode away.

When he returned, it was still hot and he wasn't talking about trees anymore. He wasn't talking about anything. He just sat at the kitchen table and ate his supper, potatoes and beans, sprinkled with salt.

"They're calling for rain," her mama said. His eyes flicked up and then immediately returned to his plate, now only holding trace remains of his finished supper. His chair scraped the floor as he stood and headed toward the screen door. He hesitated at the door, looking back at the table. Her mother started to get up, but the chair leg caught in the unevenness of the floor.

"I'll be out back, chopping wood." He let the screen door fall shut on his words. Her mother sank back down in her chair, staring

at the beans left on her plate.

Many years later, when Ella thinks about that day, she wishes she had gone out to the tree one last time. That she would have sat in its branches and watched her father chop wood. But she didn't go out in the yard, didn't even look back at the tree. She helped her mother clean up the supper. She wiped the table with the rag and swept up the floor, a bean was lying beneath her father's chair. The air in the house was still and hot and quiet. She is sure that the window was open because she remembers hearing the thump of the axe as it landed on the wood. No one was talking or humming or scarcely even breathing. They were moving about without thinking, like all the surplus air had been sucked out them as well.

When Ella finished sweeping she looked over at her mother. She was at the screen door, her hand to her mouth. The thunder clap sounded and Ella jumped as loud rain drops began hitting the roof. Rain was coming in through the window and the screen door, but her mother didn't move. She heard her father yelling from outside.

"Come on woman! We gots to get everyone down in the cellar! The storm's about us." He opened the door and Ella saw that his shirt and hair were wet. He rushed into the kitchen, his wet boots slipping on the floor. He hustled and grabbed and pushed them all out the door and around the



Short Story



Dorothy Williams

Ellis was an early visitor to the church yard. The rooster at the farm where he was staying had woken him at daybreak and, unable to sleep again, he waited till he heard the farmer and his wife get up and then decided that he, too, would rise. He had slept surprisingly well and was ready for the task before him. He washed, shaved and then dressed in his jeans and T-shirt. He pushed a sweater into his knapsack for, despite the early morning sunshine, it might be cool outside. As he went down the narrow, twisting staircase to the stone-flagged hall, he met Mrs. Dumphreys who was busily mopping the floor.

"Good morning Mr. Morton," she said, "going for a stroll?"

"Yes. I thought I should like to take a look at the church before I leave."

"Oh, you'll enjoy that. It's one of the oldest in the county. Do you still want breakfast at eight?"

"Yes, please. I don't want to be late at Heathrow."

"Right. See you then. Enjoy your walk," and with that Mrs. Dumphreys headed for the kitchen. She was young and glamorous and quick in all her movements. Not at all what Ellis had expected; but her cooking was superb and Ellis thought it was as well for his waistline that he was not staying any longer. Not that he was overweight. He was just six feet tall, and the athletic type, with fair wavy hair and a pleasant, more than handsome, face. But he had turned forty and was becoming weight-conscious.

Ellis had been to the churchyard before, just to check what he would need, so he knew the way across the village green and up the narrow Church Lane with its high bramble hedge on either side. Soon he came to the fine lych-gate and

Mission accomplished

the War Memorial. Ellis thought of his father, a survivor of the 1939-45 war, who had died at a good old age just a few months earlier. He remembered their last conversation and the promise he had made.

It was early spring and a mass of daffodils nodded and swayed in a light breeze among the lichen-covered gravestones which had settled unevenly over the years, leaning this way and that like a party of revellers staggering home from the village pub. To the left a huge, hollow yew tree leant gratefully on a prop, without which support it would have long since dropped to the ground.

A wide gravel path led to the black-oak studded door which stood open and welcoming, its stone step worn down by centuries of worshippers. The church was small and quaint with a squat square tower at its west end.

Ellis walked round the church, admiring the view over the valley. He read some of the inscriptions on the gravestones. A few graves had statues on them. One grave had been covered with crazy-paving; aubrietia, in differing shades of mauve, grew in the cracks between the stones and at one corner was a birdbath. Nearby a similar grave had a sundial at one corner. Ellis approached it and, looking round to ensure he was quite alone, he took off his knapsack and opened it.

A few minutes later he walked back to the church door, ducked his head under the lintel and entered the building. Vases of daffodils on the altar steps and round the font filled the air with their delicate fragrance. He picked up a leaflet detailing the interesting features of the church and was over-awed by the Norman arch to the Chancel and the rare three-decker pulpit.

Back home, where a building of just one century was considered old, to be standing in a place of such antiquity was almost beyond belief. He sat in one of the pews, absorbing it all – the sunlight enlivening the rich blues and reds of the east window – the gleaming brass candle-sticks – the embroidered altar cloth. He bowed his head and said a prayer for the soul of his father.

"You can rest in peace, Pop. It's done."

He looked at his watch. 7.45 a.m. Just time to get back to the farm by 8 o'clock for breakfast, and then get on his way to the airport for his 2 p.m. flight to Toronto.

The drive to London was uneventful – the countryside wonderfully green and lush – here and there groups of primroses on the banks of the highways – like pale yellow cushions. He thought of the poem he had learned as a boy at school, 'Oh, to be in England now that April's there' and felt he could not have paid his visit at a better time.

At the airport he returned the car to the rental company and joined the crowds in the Departure Terminal. The noise and hubbub was an unpleasant contrast to the peace he had experienced in the country churchyard just hours before.

Soon he was aboard the aircraft and, as the plane was positioned at the runway and the engines roared ready for take-off, he settled back in his seat with a pleasant feeling of achievement.

A few days later when the vicar and his wife were having tea he told her of a strange happening.

"Do you know, my dear, Old Tom was cutting the grass in the churchyard today when he noticed the gnomon is back on the old Grayson grave. He said it went missing years ago. Village rumour had it that it was taken by the Canadian airmen stationed here just before D-day. Some of them were boasting in the pub that they had found a way to stop time! . . . Another funny thing happened today as well. When I checked the Restoration Fund Box I found an envelope with one thousand Canadian dollars stuffed in it . . . now that really is a godsend . . . and I wish a blessing on whoever was kind enough to give it."

Dorothy Williams was born and raised in England. She has two children: a son who went to live in New Zealand some 30 years ago and a daughter who came to Canada at about the same time.

A few years after the death of her husband, she decided to join her daughter in Canada and has lived here now for almost thirteen years. She does voluntary work at the local library and has also joined a writers' group there.



The tree . . . continued from p.10

house to the cellar. The rain was coming hard and the wind whipped it into Ella's face. She squeezed her eyes shut and grabbed on to her father's shirt. The thunder cracked again and lightning lit up the yard. It forced her eyes open and she saw her father, panic and care knit together in his face. He struggled against the wind to open the cellar door.

"Get in, get in now!" he urged when the door had been pried back. It was stuffy and smelly and strangely quiet in the cellar. The wind seemed muffled and rain had lost its fury.

"We're safe now. Don't worry, we're safe now." Ella felt her father's strong arms around her. They were wet and cold. She reached across and found his hand holding her mother's arm.

Ella remembers dozing off as they sat huddled in the darkness and dampness. She remembers feeling that she was in a safe place, a place surrounded by her family, with her father's arms encircling and entwining everyone. His fingers and arms were like

roots, holding them all up, connecting them all together. She thinks he was humming or singing or praying, but she can't quite remember.

A shocking thunderclap made them all jump. Ella was jarred awake. Her father's arms were tense and hard around her. A shattering sound followed the thunder, of wood and glass breaking, of metal twisting.

"I'd better go and see," her father said. He was getting up, shifting them all from their places.

"No," her mother's voice was so quiet. "Stay here with us."

"I'll be right back." He sounded sure, but worry was creeping into his voice. Ella felt him pat clumsily at her hair as he struggled to open the cellar door. The wind was still strong, almost like it was trying to keep him inside. But he prevailed, he was determined and the door finally opened. The door slammed shut after he left, but not before drenching them all anew with the pouring rain. Ella's mother roughly pulled her over;

she was shaking. The thunder struck again, followed by another crash.

Much rubble lay in the wake of the storm. Windows were broken, little pieces of wood and debris were everywhere. Ella and family, minus her father, stumbled out of the cellar, blinking their eyes at the wreckage. Ella walked to the back of the house. The yard was unrecognizable. The tree, her beloved tree, was fallen, split apart with a blackened scar and crashed to the ground. From under one of the branches Ella saw her father's work boots, laces untied. Her mother ran past her, shaking and sobbing, falling at the boots and pounding her fists into the ground.

A few years after the storm, Ella stood at the base of the once mighty tree. Sun shone on her face. Her shoes were wet from the dew. Ella looked up to where the branches once bowed, to where the leaves once shaded and hid her from sight. A movement

in the grass brought her gaze down, and, to her amazement, she saw a tiny shoot coming out of the burnt scar. She sucked in her breath.

"Amazing isn't it?" She hadn't heard him approach. He didn't walk so heavy now, although walking was difficult for him. And he always wore his boots laced tightly up.

"With a tree there's always hope," he said. "It sprouts again."

Heidi Kerssies is a primary teacher who has taught Christian schools in British Columbia, Honduras, and Ontario. She presently lives in Ontario where she loves riding her bicycle and hanging out in her hammock reading a good book.



Children Stories

Last week we published the two winners of our short story contest – children's division. This week we decided to also print the two runners-up.

Candy Land

Alinda Brouwer

There were two girls named Alinda and Heidi. They lived in a place where it is all candy. It was named Candy Land! Everything that is healthy in our world was unhealthy in Candy Land. Everything that is unhealthy in our world was healthy there.

The girls loved to play in Mango Juice Lake. They could sip on the mango juice while swimming. They were very careful never to pee in this lake!

Everyone's houses and furniture were made out of hardened chocolate. There were no pets, no parents, and NO BOYS in Candy Land. It was the greatest place ever.

Usually in Candy Land, it never got higher than 90 degrees F. The girls loved swimming when it got that hot. One day, it started to get really hot. Alinda looked at the thermometer and said, "Let's go swimming!"

Heidi said, "OK, it is pretty hot out, anyway. Let's take some healthy snacks."

Alinda said, "We don't have to pack healthy snacks, there's plenty at the lake. We can eat the licorice and gummy bear trees

and leaves. We can eat the gummy worm grass or chocolate dirt, and if we get lucky, we might find a bubble gum tree."

"Yay! Let's go!" yelled Heidi.

The girls raced to the lake and happily swam and snacked. After a while, Alinda realized something was wrong: "Where are our friends?" she asked.

Heidi replied, "Oh, they're probably snoozing in their houses."

Alinda was still worried, and said, "Let's go check on them, just to be sure that they're OK."

The girls hopped out of the lake and squeezed the mango juice out of their hair. Then, they started following the chocolate path to Megan's house. When they were hungry, they just picked up a couple of gummy worm grass blades.

As they got closer to Megan's house, all they saw was a big puddle of chocolate. Heidi was gazing at the cotton candy clouds with a hungry look on her face, when Alinda said, "Heidi, look out! Don't fall into the puddle!"

"What puddle?" said Heidi, still gazing

up into the frosting blue sky. Then, Heidi looked down, and she saw it too. "Where's Megan?" she asked.

Alinda said, "How should I know? Let's go look for her." They ran to Gummy Bear Meadow first, because that was Megan's favourite place. She was there.

"My house melted into a big, chocolate puddle," she said.

"We know," said Alinda and Heidi. They decided to go check on their other friends, Kayla, Ali and Gerri. Ali was in Licorice Grove, Kayla was in Gummy Bear Field, but they couldn't find Gerri.

"Let's go check her house," said Ali.

"OK," said the other girls. They walked to Gerri's house eating gummy worms on the way. Her house was a big chocolate puddle also, but they couldn't find Gerri.

"There she is," yelled Kayla, "in the middle of the puddle!"

"We'll get some licorice rope!" said Alinda and Heidi. They ran off to Gum Drop Hill to pick some licorice hanging from the weeping willows. They grabbed some

rope and tied them together make a long rope, then ran back to Kayla and Ali.

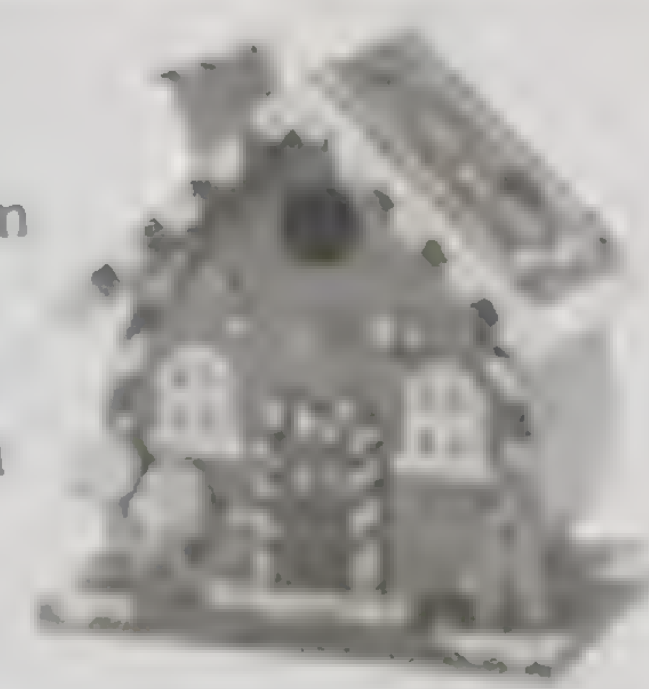
"Grab this," said Ali, throwing the licorice rope to Gerri.

"But it is black, I wanted red licorice," complained Gerri.

"Just grab it," said Ali, "it doesn't matter about the colour!" They pulled Gerri out, all of them getting covered with chocolate. Then, they went to have a nice bath in Mango Juice Lake.

After they had their bath, they started to make new houses out of the hardened chocolate blocks, the way igloos are made. They planted fast-growing licorice rope trees around all the houses to shade them and stop them from melting again. Then, they all went together to play in Mango Juice Lake.

Alinda Brouwer is a nine-year-old girl who lives in Prinsburg, MN.



The mean rabbit

Grace Van Farowe

Deep sat on a stump in the middle of the fenced-in area that he and the other rabbits shared.

"Get off there," said a voice. It was Squeak, the rabbit bully who lived next door to Deep. Squeak growled ferociously. Deep smiled.

"Hi, Squeak," he said. "Would you like to sit on this stump?"

Squeak ignored him. "Get off there," he repeated.

Deep hopped good-naturedly off the stump. "Goodbye," he said. Squeak did not answer.

During morning exercises, Squeak was shouting at the other rabbits. "Deep!" he said. "Do ten push-ups now, and Pip, get out of that corner and do 100 jumping jacks!" Both rabbits obeyed him, but Pip whimpered.

"I'm bored of jumping jacks," he said, and after he had done less than 99 of them he laid down on the ground, exhausted. Then Squeak walked over him purposely, ignoring Pip completely.

"Stop!" shrieked Pip.

"Pip? I didn't know you were there."

"You knew I was there!" Pip said, burning with fury.

"Naw!" said Squeak.

Deep walked over to Squeak's house with his heart pounding. He knocked on the door. Squeak opened the door a crack and commanded, "Don't come in! I'm busy!"

"Will you come over to my house for supper tomorrow?" asked Deep. "I eat at six."

"No!" said Squeak. "I never ever want to come to one of your foolish dinners. Go away!"

Deep walked away, thinking to himself,

Well, with an attitude like that, I hope he doesn't come.

No, he scolded himself; I shouldn't say that about another rabbit. I can still have a fancy dinner and if he comes – though it isn't very likely – I can act out my plan then.

The next day, Deep found himself preparing for a large dinner without knowing if he would be eating it himself or with Squeak. He wasn't surprised when six o'clock came and went with no sign of Squeak. He still hoped that Squeak might come because he had often seen Squeak eating through his window at seven. He set aside much of his dinner, and he ate the rest himself.

At seven o'clock, he thought he heard a knock on the door. "Come in!" he called cheerfully, with his mouth full of salad. He heard a *thump thump* that sounded like the paws of two rabbits.

"Where are you?" said a high voice.

"I'm in the dining area," said Deep. Deep got up, thinking to himself, *That doesn't sound like Squeak.*

He saw Squeak in the living space with a spotted female rabbit with glasses.

"Who's this?" asked Deep.

"Oh, it's just my friend Miss Dotsy," said Squeak, as if Deep should have known all along that he had a friend named Miss Dotsy.

Deep said, "Nice to meet you, Miss Dotsy. I made spinach pie, salad, and carrot cake. Please sit down."

Miss Dotsy smiled and said, "Nice to meet you, too, Deep. It's so kind of you to invite us for dinner."

Deep laughed on the inside but on the outside he just smiled.

"Well," said Deep, looking with curiosity at Miss Dotsy. "Where do you come

from?"

"Hollywood, California," said Miss Dotsy.

"Hollywood? Are you a movie star?" asked Deep.

"I used to be," said Miss Dotsy.

"Well, let's eat," said Squeak.

"Carrot cake is my favourite," said Miss Dotsy.

"That's good to know," said Deep. He was thinking. "How did you two meet each other?" he asked.

Squeak said, "Oh, in college we were in love." He made it sound like it was a matter-of-fact subject and it was every day that rabbits fell in love.

Maybe Miss Dotsy can help me make Squeak nice again, Deep thought.

Just then, Squeak asked, "Do you have a bathroom?"

"It's the third door on the left," Deep answered.

When Squeak had left, Deep turned to Miss Dotsy and asked, "Well, do you think you're still in love with Squeak?"

Miss Dotsy blushed. "A little," she said, but her eyes sparkled.

"Squeak has been acting mean to the rest of us rabbits," Deep told her. "And I wondered if you could help."

Miss Dotsy smiled. "Well, of course, I'd be delighted."

"Good," said Deep.

Just then, Squeak returned. "Were you talking about me?" he asked.

"Deep and I were talking about love," said Miss Dotsy.

"Can we change the subject now?" Squeak asked.

"Of course, Squeaky dear," Miss Dotsy



said, smiling and blushing at the same time. She went over and sat on Squeak's lap. They hugged more than once, and then Miss Dotsy shyly kissed her old love on the cheek.

I think that they are falling in love again! Deep thought to himself. *Maybe if Squeak marries Miss Dotsy, she will help him learn to be kinder to us rabbits.*

A paw knocked on his door, and he called, "Who is it?"

"It's me, Pip. Come over to my house for a party!"

Deep shook his head sadly and yelled, "I have company, but –"

"We can all go!" interrupted Squeak in such a friendly tone that even Miss Dotsy was surprised. "And bring the rest of this delightful carrot cake with us. Who would want to miss Pip's party?"

Deep was very surprised. Maybe Squeak was already cured of his meanness!

At the party, all the rabbits cleared out of Squeak's way. However, he just greeted them with a cheery "Hi!" and offered to play ping-pong with a group of teenagers.

At first the teenagers were scared that he would do something to them, but after a while they accepted him as one of the group.

All the rabbits noticed a change in Squeak that day. He was kind and friendly and when he would see a forlorn-looking rabbit, he would go over to cheer him up.

A week later, Squeak and Miss Dotsy were married. Rabbits for miles around attended. Although he still had some things to learn, from that day on, Squeak was a changed rabbit.

Grace is an eight-year-old girl who lives in Durham, North Carolina

AUGUST 9, 2010

Social Gospel

Christianity's social side: the Social Gospel movement and labour (Part I)

Bert den Boggende

In Galatians 1:6-9 Paul complained that some Galatians Christians were "turning to a different gospel." Is the Social Gospel also another gospel, as Harry Antonides in his book *Stones for Bread*, has argued? Unquestionably, he is correct as far as the more extreme views are concerned, but that's not the whole picture, since the Social Gospel was richly varied.

Some background

As the stories of Cain and Abel and Ruth indicate, we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, and, as the prophets made clear, that included all of life. After preaching a sermon and feeding the people, Jesus showed that there was to be no disconnect between his preaching and the people's physical needs. Throughout history the church has tried to implement the social side of the gospel. At times their efforts were all-encompassing, but sometimes there was a serious disconnect. In Luther's views there was a significant gap between his teachings and the commercial world. In spite of Calvin's attempt to restore that connection, there continued to be a significant chasm between the church and the working class.

This was partly due to the influence of pietism, which all too often concerned itself only with the saving of souls. John Wesley tried to restore that connection again and Methodism followed suit. Yet, in the 19th century, Canadian Methodism gradually moved to the middle class and away from the needs of the workers. William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, however, left no doubt about the connection between the gospel and social needs in his book *In Darkest London and the Way Out*.

It should be quite clear by now that, since early Bible times, attempts have been made to ensure that the social side of life was integrally related to the gospel. As far as the Social Gospel is concerned, its proponents argued that the church had failed in several areas to keep the two areas connected.

In its conservative guise the Social Gospel was little more than a restoration of the gospel's social side. In its radical guise it wanted to transform society. In order to understand the movement, I want to look first at a variety of developments and then at the variety of Social Gospel's religious views.

Industrialization began in Eng-

land in the mid-18th century, but in Canada a century later. Consequently, some of its abuses, which happened mainly in the cities, became apparent later in Canada than elsewhere. With industrialization, time became a commodity. People had to learn to synchronize their time with industry. The tyranny of the clock began to spread and the cheap watch began to appear (in the US in 1880). Time as a commodity created friction for those who had to change their lifestyles. Industrialization also meant working long hours, sometimes up to 16 hours a day. No wonder that people began to clamour for shorter workdays. Moreover, working conditions were dreadful and, not surprisingly, the workers tried to strike.

Down on strikers

Employers, many of whom were influential churchmen, strenuously opposed shorter work hours, which, they argued, would hamper international competition. Newspaper articles indicate their views on strikes. In 1872 the *Presbyterian Witness* remarked on the Toronto printers' strike that it struck at the very root of personal independence and perpetuated moral demoralization. The Methodist *Christian Guardian* commented that the workers' individualistic ethic was untenable, suggesting sobriety as one solution. Later, the Nova Scotia *Presbyterian Witness* observed that "Strikes are in the main foolish and costly luxuries to all concerned." Between 1880 and 1900 tension grew between churches and the working class over strikes, resulting in an increasing sense of alienation by workers towards the often middle-class-dominated churches.

The flood of immigrants contributed to the expansion of industries as well as to the anxieties of the churches. Their entry, as well as their exit to the US, created instability and uncertainty at a time of recession and recovery. Most moved to the cities, creating urban problems in housing, water supply, sanitation, public health, transportation, fire and police protection, environment, and city government. They were perceived as posing a threat to the country if they were not assimilated. Long before the Social Gospel appeared, Christian individuals as well as some churches, most notably the Salvation Army, showed concern

about these developments. Generally speaking, however, during much of the 19th century the churches showed a remarkable lack of concern about poverty.

Three complications

In addition, two intellectual developments created anxieties for the churches. While there is no need here to review the crisis which Darwin's theory of evolution provoked, it may be pointed out that many Christians came to accept evolution, not infrequently in its Spencerian social guise. Significant for Social Gospel thinking was that Darwin focused on the origins of *species* rather than on the survival of the fittest *individuals*. While the churches had emphasized individual salvation, the Social Gospel showed interest in groups (species).

Historical criticism of Scripture caused a second intellectual crisis. Many Christians came to reject the simple literal interpretation of Scripture. One reaction to these crises led to fundamentalism, another led to an attempt to salvage Christianity by transforming it into an essentially social religion.

Finally, there was still another crisis, which is often overlooked. While men were usually the leaders in the churches, there was also a significant loss of men attending. As one author put it, "the loss of men from church and pulpit was frequently described as a clear sign of the incompatibility between typical religious forms and the masculine character." Religion came to be regarded as too otherworldly. Men began to equate public profession of faith with unmanliness. Early 19th-century chivalry gradually was transformed into "muscular Christianity" as a way to attract males to the faith. The emphasis was on a strenuous life, character building, self-control, and active service to others. While the Social Gospel cannot be equated with muscular Christianity, the issues of loss of male membership and manly character played a role in the movement.

A mixed bag

It is in this context that various types of Social Gospel emerged. American Social Gospel ideas differed from those in Canada; the Canadian Maritimes differed from

Ontario and Ontario from the Prairies; the Presbyterian Church differed from the Methodist Church and the Anglican Church; the conservatives differed from the progressives and these again from the radicals. To cite here just one example: the American Social Gospel was heavily influenced by German theologian Albrecht Ritschl, whose influence in Canada was limited; in fact, the Canadian Social Gospel was influenced by British idealism. Thus, while Willem Visser 't Hooft's 1928 [1963] book on the origins of the Social Gospel is still very useful for the American scene, it is of much more limited use for the Canadian scene. Likewise, Richard Allen's publications, which concentrated on Methodism, should be treated with considerable care when dealing with Presbyterians.

The Social Gospel had a variety of roots. From evangelicalism it inherited activism. Revivals spread the idea that radical change in life was possible; that God's love was available to anyone desiring it; and that the individual could take the initiative in approaching God. They popularized the idea that God was an immanent being available to man and working in the process of reformation. They stressed personal repentance and God's grace for restoration. While much of revivalism borrowed from Arminianism, Presbyterianism, through predestination, provided the foundations for the reassertion of the gospel's social mandate.

Anglicans, however, did not rely on evangelicalism but on

their traditions of paternalism and sacramentalism. After the revivals, the churches started to struggle with original sin in connection with children's baptism. Out of this struggle emerged the idea of original goodness, which provided a more hopeful basis for Christians to engage in "secular" social reform. Moreover, the sense of an immanent God working in the revivals became transferred to social movements.

Scholars have mentioned Scottish evangelical liberalism and British idealism as roots. I would like to add another theological root. The 19th century saw two diverging forms of millennialism, pre-millennialism, which has influenced so many North American denominations, and post-millennialism. The latter was optimistic and allied to the notion of progress. In its extreme form it held that human beings could establish God's Kingdom on earth and that progress was providentially ordained. That optimism was shattered by World War I, which was why Richard Allen argued that after WW I the Social Gospel movement was in decline. Not all scholars have agreed with Allen's assessment, but it cannot be denied that this optimistic post-millennial view contributed significantly to the Social Gospel's attempt to reform society.

Part II will be continued next week

Bert den Boggende (bertdenb@yahoo.com) is a retired teacher who lives in Brooks, Alberta



Crowd gathered outside old City Hall during the Winnipeg General Strike, June 21, 1919

Reformed Thought

blog: (n) short for weblog, a website containing an online journal with reflections, comments and links.

Christian Courier gives you a glimpse into current Reformed thinking by presenting excerpts from some of today's top blogs.

Blogs are usually free-association, occasional, off-the-cuff and may not conform to the standards of print publications.



<http://reformeddoctrine.wordpress.com/about/>

Although I grew up in the Christian Reformed Church in Muskegon, Michigan, I moved to Florida in 1977 to go to law school, and I stayed here in Florida. I attended and was a member, even a lay leader, in a large range of churches from Assembly of God to Baptist to Calvary Chapel to United Methodist to nondenominational churches and small fellowships. At first, I did not realize that Reformed doctrine would not necessarily be preached in all Christian Protestant churches. I thought that the problem was just with a particular minister. Eventually, a childhood friend, who now lives in Grand Rapids, Michigan, asked me if I remembered "TULIP". I began to study TULIP, which is the Five Points of Calvinism and the most important part of Reformed doctrine. I studied the differences between Calvinism and Arminianism. That study made me aware that often what bothered me was not just bad preaching but rather it was bad doctrine (Arminianism). That study made me understand the importance of Reformed doctrine.

July 27, 2010

Using all the Help of Scripture

A reader suggested, without my request, that I may want to use my reply as a follow-up to my devotion today titled "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident": "But the fruit of the Spirit is love".

He wrote as his reply to my reply: "wow you wrote a lot thanks. Feel free to send as a follow up if you want for others to enjoy."

It is not necessary to include his first comment to which I replied. I want to keep his first comment private, at least beyond what may be inferred from my reply.

Here is what I wrote:

"Thank you for your reply and deep meditation.

It is true both from Scripture and our practical experience that we continue to sin. "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us." 1 John 1:8-10.

It is also true as Paul writes that God works within us. "For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." Philippians 1:6-11.

But, we cannot just sit back. We are urged to resist sin. "Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons,

"MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." Hebrews 12:1-6.

We are also commanded to put on the full armor of God. "Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:10-17.

And, we have seen from today's Scripture that we are also commanded to walk by the Spirit.

I think it is true, as you point out, that the sinful desires are no longer our master. We find that we can resist them more and more, not necessarily in a perfect "straight-up" improvement over time, but we do notice with delight God's work within us. We find

over time both a mortification of the old man and a quickening of the new man. As stated below in the Heidelberg Catechism, we find more within us a "sincere sorrow of heart, that we have provoked God by our sins; and more and more to hate and flee from them". We also find more within us a "sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works".*

(* Question 88. Of how many parts doth the true conversion of man consist?

Answer. Of two parts; of the mortification of the old, and the quickening of the new man.

Question 89. What is the mortification of the old man?

Answer. It is a sincere sorrow of heart, that we have provoked God by our sins; and more and more to hate and flee from them.

Question 90. What is the quickening of the new man?

Answer. It is a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works.)

In summary, the whole process is, in a sense, fixing our eyes on Jesus. As we read and use all of God's Word, as we hope and pray for all of God's work to be perfected within us, and as practice these things, we behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord and are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."

24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

July 23, 2010

The Lost Brother: "But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother"

Today's devotion is Luke 15:11-32 which contains the well-known story of The Prodigal Son which can also be called The Lost Brother in line of these three adjacent parables. We will focus on verses 25-32.

25 "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 "And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. 27 "And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 "But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. 29 "But he answered and said to his father, 'Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; 30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.' 31 "And he said to him, 'Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 'But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.'" Luke 15:25-32.

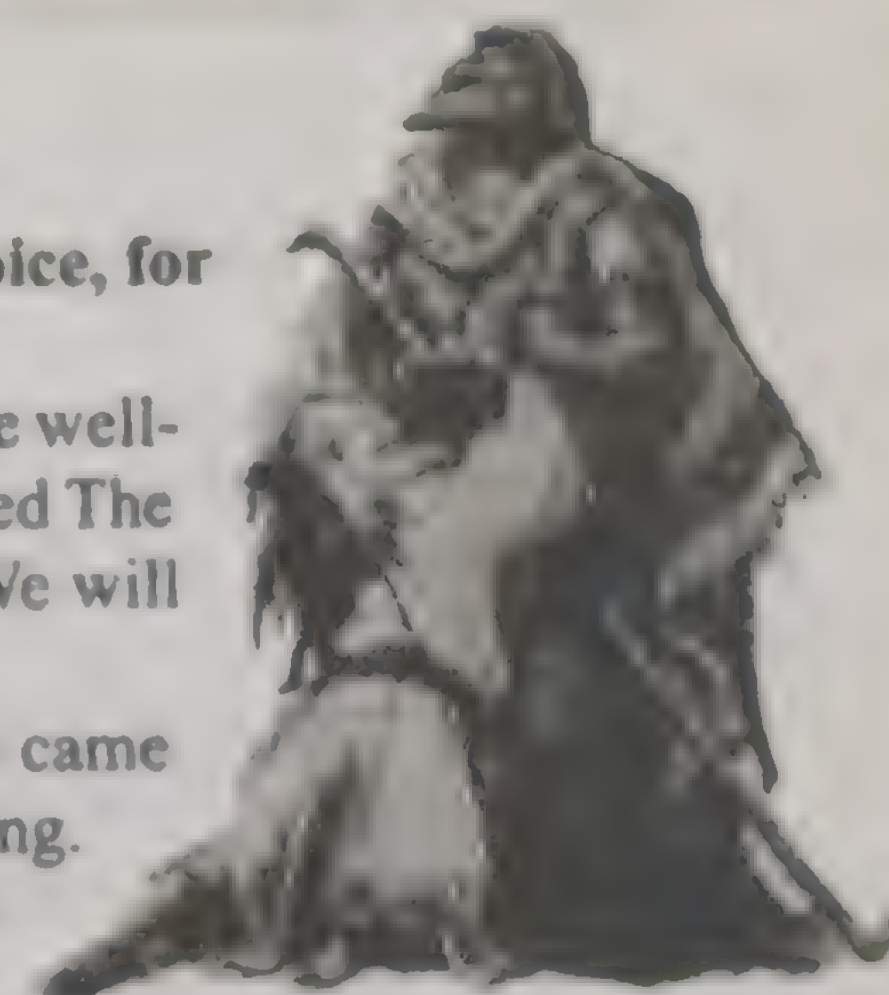
It is interesting to compare these three parables: The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, and The Lost Son. We see an increasing value to the lost object from 1 out of 100 sheep to 1 out of 10 silver coins to 1 out of 2 sons. We also see a change of focus from the persistent "finder" of the Shepherd and the Woman in the first two parables to the lost brother who "came to his senses" and returned on his own in the last parable.

Accordingly, although there are so many lessons that can be learned from this parable, I want to focus on the compassion that we should have as mature Christians, even Reformed Christians, for our lost brothers. As Reformed Christians, we tend to be like the older son. We are faithful. We don't stray from home. We do our duty.

We may also be like the "frozen chosen". We may not deserve credit for the returning of the lost brother.

But, the least we can do is "celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found."

posted by Bill Hornbeck



Culture



One thing I will say for the Internet – since it came along, genealogical research is a snap. Which is why, when I was in Holland this past summer, I learned a great deal about the Rang family, courtesy of Dutch online archives.

As family records become more widely available, more and more people are seeking out their roots. Nowadays, if you want a full report on your ancestors, it's usually a matter of a few minutes before the computer spits out a list of names. There are no pictures or stories to accompany the births and deaths – just the facts.

That's too bad. Because family histories – the stories, anecdotes and themes that run across the decades – can help give a person a valuable sense of identity in a fractured and fast-moving world. They can give us a sense of God moving through our ancestors' hearts, and history, to accomplish his will for our lives, right now.

A magical time

Let me give you an example of what I mean:

Back in the 1970s, my dad had a clock shop in a warehouse in Bowmanville, Ontario. It was called "The William R. Rang Clock Company."

I can remember going there as a kid of about five or six and sitting in his office chair, in front of the brand new Remington typewriter, mashing away at the keys for hours on end. Even then, I loved seeing my name in print. That was the start of my writer's ego, for sure.

Dad would be in the back, putting clocks together from the kits that were shipped to us from Holland.

That time was magical.

We lived in Oshawa, and Bowmanville – which was seven miles away – seemed distant and exotic. It had a restaurant called "The Flying Dutchman." Dad loved to go there for coffee because of the name, and because it was just down the street from the warehouse.

It was a great way to pass the time. Just me, and Dad, and a warehouse full of great stuff – fiddly bits, and golden gears, and sawdust and packing boxes.

Dad loved clockwork. He was even a decent clockmaker. But he wasn't a businessman.

The William R. Rang Clock company went bankrupt after a container of his clocks washed overboard in the North Sea.

A common enemy

It wasn't the first time the North Sea has taken something away from our family.

In the 1700s and 1800s, the Rangs were involved in the commercial whaling industry near the island of Ameland. A good number of the men in my family perished at sea over

A sense of time

the centuries. When the whaling industry collapsed completely in the 1860s, the Rangs were left stuck on Ameland with no marketable skills. The decades that followed were marked with incredible tragedy – grinding poverty, sickness and even murder.

It wasn't until my Opa Lolke Rang discovered the teaching profession that the Rangs gave up the sea for good. My dad followed him into the new family business, but for some reason, my dad decided to leave teaching and try his hand at business.

He ought to have known better. In the end, it took years for our family to recover. And there was the ever-present reminder of the unsold clocks to mark my family's failure.

All the clocks in the showroom wound up in the study in our house, and for years afterwards, every hour on the hour, all the chimes struck at once in an absolute cacophony of clockwork.



Nostalgic visit

A few years ago, I was visiting a kitchen cabinet maker here in Bowmanville when I realized I was standing in Dad's clock shop. When I said that, out loud, the guy who was helping me – who was also a Dutchman – said: "Yeah, I remember that. This would have been the front office. I remember you, as a little boy, following your dad around. You used to introduce yourself as the vice-president of the company."

That sounds like something I might have said, alright.

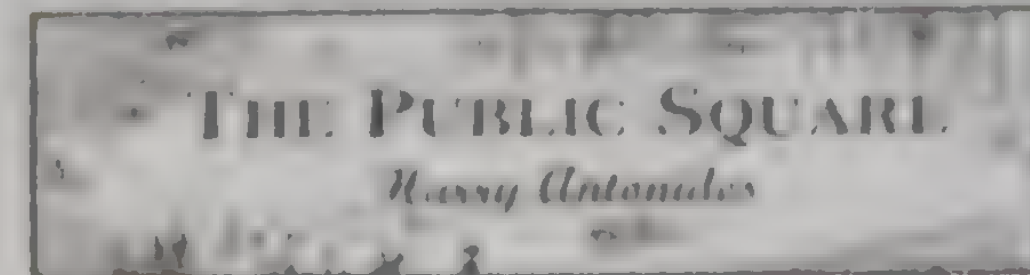
Dad's buried in a cemetery just down the road from that warehouse now. Just across from a farmer's field. It's quiet, and there are no clocks anywhere nearby to mark the time.

I have the desk and the chair from the office. I am sitting in his chair now. It's hideous and cracked and worn and every squeak reminds me of my dad, sitting at it. I swear it still smells like pipe smoke.

My son, Cameron sits in it, more and more often these days, playing games on the computer.

Two 'striking' metaphors

Dad used to say our life's journey was like a clock pendulum – so long at it stays connected at the top, to our faith in God, we keep on swinging as we're meant to. It's a



Nomad is an incredible, often heartbreaking, story of a noble and courageous woman who escaped the misery and abuse suffered by millions of women in the Muslim world. Ayaan Hirsi Ali previously published *The Caged Virgin* and *Infidel* in which she explained why and how she escaped a life of virtual slavery under Islam. *Nomad* is her answer to a question she is often asked: "Is your experience typical and representative of life under Islam?" She responds:

It is not only about my own life as a wanderer in the West; it is also about the lives of many immigrants to the West, the philosophical and very real difficulties of people, especially women, who live in a tightly closed traditional Muslim culture within a broadly open culture. It is about how Islamic ideals clash with Western ideals. It is about the clash of civilizations that I and millions of others have lived and continue to live. (XIII)

Nomad is devoted to a discussion of her family members, explaining how most of them who immigrated to the West came to grief; her move from Holland to America in 2006 amidst political turmoil; the three most difficult areas confronting Muslim immigrants (sex, money, violence); and how to navigate the gap between a closed clan-based society and an open Western democracy.

Escape from bondage

Born in Somalia in 1969, she was destined, similar to her grandmother and mother, to marry someone selected by her father. When she was 22 years old, her father arranged her marriage to a distant relative who was a stranger to her. In "a kind of instinctive desperation" she decided to defy her father and flee to Holland where she applied for and received refugee status.

In Holland she was overwhelmed with the kindness and freedom she had never experienced before. She quickly learned the language, studied political science at the University of Leiden and worked as an interpreter for the Dutch social services. In 2003 she became a member of the Dutch Parliament where she specialized in immigration policies.

good metaphor. A clockmaker's metaphor.

It's a fitting metaphor for a family that has seen its ambitions for material or worldly success thwarted time and time again – forcing us to return to what is truly important.

I have a metaphor, too. It comes from watching the ink spools on the old Remington winding along as the keys hit the page:

There's a ribbon running from heart to heart between the men in my family. A love among fathers and sons that travels across time, bound up in the words we write and love, in the labour of our hands, even in our

Challenge from a nomad

Ali is an outspoken critic of radical Islam and of Muslim immigrants who refuse to integrate and to respect the culture of their host countries. She cooperated with Theo van Gogh in producing a short film, *Submission*, about the oppression of Muslim women. On November 2, 2004, a Dutch-born Muslim, Mohammed Bouyeri, murdered van Gogh. He left a letter on van Gogh's body in which he warned Ali that she too would be killed. (At his trial Bouyeri was

unrepentant and said: "I was motivated by the law that commands me to cut off the head of anyone who insults Allah and his prophet.")

In 2006 the Dutch minister of immigration told Ali that she would be stripped of her Dutch citizenship, although that threat was shortly withdrawn. She resigned from Parliament, and moved to the U.S., where she joined the Washington-based American Enterprise Institute.

The largest section of the book is about her agonizing struggle to overcome a sense of fear, guilt and loss she experienced when she renounced her Muslim faith and brought shame to her family. Via telephone she kept in touch with her mother and father, though listening to their pleadings to return to Allah left her feeling empty and alone. Her father died in a London hospital where she visited him a few times when he was near death.

Ali has spent a lot of time addressing audiences all over the US, while being forced to live under 24 hour-a-day bodyguard protection. She discovered that many of her listeners were incredulous when told about the number of child brides, honour killings, and female excisions in Islamic countries, but also in the West. Most of her audiences have been receptive, but not at university campuses where she met well-organized and hostile opposition by members of the Muslim student organizations.

Challenging the church

In June 2007 she met in Rome with a Dutch priest, telling him that she was not a Christian and did not want his help in becoming one. But then she said something that should resonate within the entire

See *Nomad* page 17

Lloyd Rang (Lloyd.rang@rogers.com)
is a member of Rehoboth CRC in
Bowmanville, Ontario.

Classifieds

Anniversaries



With joy and gratitude to God

BERT AND ALICE WITVOET

along with their children and grandchildren
hope to celebrate their
50th Wedding Anniversary

on August 21, 2010.

Open House from 2 - 4 p.m. at
Beacon Christian Elementary School
300 Scott St., St Catharines, Ontario

Although our anniversary date is September 23, we hope to celebrate a month early
to accommodate our school-going grandchildren from B.C. and Alberta

Address: 73 Highland Ave, St Catharines ON L2R 4H9

50th Anniversary

BILL AND VERA REKKER

August 20th
1960 - 2010

Dear Mom and Dad (Opa and Oma)
We thank God
for his faithfulness to you
and his Blessings through 50 years.

With love from your children
and grandchildren.

Art & Elisabeth Rekker, Brampton, Ont.
Aaron, Ryan, Nicole and Natalie

Paul & Bles Rekker, Brampton Ont.
Angeline

Address: 8906 Chinguacousy Rd
Brampton ON L6Y 0H8



1960 August 13 2010
It is with joy and thankfulness to God that

JOHN AND NELLY ROELOFSEN


celebrate their
50th Wedding Anniversary

with their children and grandchildren
Jeanette and Charles
Fabricia and Jim, Adriana and Cassandra
Theresa and Tom

Open House on August 15, 2010
from 2 - 4 p.m.
in Holland Christian Homes,
Horizon Hall,
35 Kingknoll Drive
Brampton, Ontario

Home address:
Apt 803 - 45 Kingknoll Drive
Brampton ON L6Y 5P



 We, the staff of Christian
Courier, wish to express our gra-
titude to all our readers. Some of
you have been subscribers for 50
plus years. We appreciate your
loyalty and are encouraged by your phone
calls and comments. Thank you.

Place your family
events on these
pages. They are still
among the best-read
pages in CC. Why?
Because we value the
gift of community.

Obituaries

Aalten July 4, 1933 - July 22, 2010 Ridgeway

Yet I am with you: you hold me by my right hand
Psalm 73:23

The Lord in his mercy took home his child

A. JOHN H. KORTEN

Beloved husband of Margaret Korten (nee Vreugdenhil)

Dear brother & brother-in-law of

Hermien Korten, Fenwick, ON

Klaske Korten, Hoogeveen, Drenthe

Gert & Grada Korten, Dinxperloo, Gelderland

Bernard & Susan Korten, Niagara Falls, ON

Albert & Nell Korten, Vineland, ON

Gerald & Nelly Korten, Dunnville, ON

John was predeceased by 3 brothers & 1 sister

Dear uncle to many nieces & nephews

Correspondence address: M. Korten, RR 1
Ridgeway ON L0S 1N0

Lord's Day 1

What is your only comfort in life & death?

A. JOHN H. KORTEN

passed peacefully at the Welland Hospital on
July 22, 2010 at 77 years

Beloved husband of Margaret

Dear father of Jochem (Brenda), Arend (Nancy)

Bill (Leysa), and Fred (Laura)

John was predeceased by his son John (1961-2006)

Cherished grandfather of 18 grandchildren and loving
brother of Gerrit (Holland), Bernard, Albert & Gerhard

John was predeceased by his brothers,

Johan, Hendrik, Willem, and sister Anna

The Williams Funeral Home (Ridgeway) held
visitation and the funeral and Memorial service

was held on July 26. Interment was held at
Pleasantview Memorial Gardens in Fonthill

Those who wish may make a donation to the
Parkinson's Society. On-line guests register at
www.williamsfuneralhome.ca

It is with great sadness that we announce the
passing of our dear husband, father, grandfather
and great-grandfather into glory
Frank passed away suddenly on July 22, 2010 at
Southlake Regional Health Centre, Newmarket,
surrounded by his loved ones

FRANK WEENING

of the Holland Marsh in his 78th Year

Beloved husband of Rita (nee Stam) for 52 years

Loving father of Grace and John Buisman, Doug

and Brenda Weening, Amy and Albert Brown,

Elaine and John Van Dyk, Carrie and Len Kooy

Cherished Grandpa to Scott, Greg, Julie (James)

and Dave; Emily (Dan) Nick and Richard; Sarah,

Elijah, Christina and Joseph; Dennis (Ana),

Melanie, Jodie, Jennifer and Shannon; Felicia

(Johan) Andrew, Thomas, Darren (Jackie) and

Evan (Megan). Dear great-grandpa of Kaylen.

Frank will be fondly remembered by his many

brothers and sisters and their families

Born on August 1, 1932 in Surhuizum,

Friesland, Netherlands. Immigrated to Bradford,

Ontario, Canada in 1952. Married Rita (Stam) in

March 1958 and farmed for 50 years in the Holland

Marsh, of Bradford, Ontario.

Praising his heavenly father was one of his

greatest passions, and he lived his life to the full-

est with all that the Lord had blessed him with

1 I lift up my eyes to the hills -

where does my help come from?

2 My help comes from the LORD,

the Maker of heaven and earth.

3 He will not let your foot slip -

he who watches over you will not slumber,

4 indeed, he who watches over Israel

will neither slumber nor sleep. Psalm 121:1-4

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Say to those with fearful hearts,
"Be strong, do not fear
your God will come,
he will come with vengeance;
with divine retribution,
he will come to save you."
and the ransomed of the Lord will return.
They will enter Zion with singing;
everlasting joy will crown their heads.
Gladness and joy will overtake them,
and sorrow and sighing will flee away."
Isaiah 35:4, 10

BERENDINA HENDRIKA (Heusinkveld) HARTEMINK

Given life by our Lord on April 27, 1924
Varsover, The Netherlands
Taken to himself June 28, 2010, Aylmer, Ontario

Wife of Dick Hartemink († July 5, 2006)

Mother and Grandmother of

Henry & Annette Hartemink, Aylmer, ON

Carrie & Darwin VanWynsberghe

Denise & Jonathan Van Dyk

Katie & Steve Pastoor

Melanie & Piet Binnendyk

Richard & MaryBeth

Ken & Beth

Evan

Bruce & Tina Hartemink, Aylmer, ON

Jennessa, Ryan

Eric & Evelina Hartemink, Aylmer, ON

Karen & Steven Werkema,

Evelyn & John Deelstra,

Brenda, Cheryl, Deric

Gary Hartemink, Aylmer ON

Lynda & Pete Eygenraam, Hamilton, ON

Jamne, Dianne, Rachel, Gregory

Erna & Michael VanGorkum, Hamilton, ON

Jiselle

and several great-grandchildren.

Correspondence: Henry Hartemink
10488 Springfield Road RR 4, Aylmer ON N5H 2R3

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Wesley, Michael, Jennifer, Benjamin, Sarah
Elly Evans (Dirk); Alan, Bradley, Carl Hylke
Louise Lise (Henry); Kevin, Jeremy, Maria
Hilda Talsma (Andrew); Jason, Matthew, Kathryn

25 great-grandchildren

13 great-great-grandchildren

God is our God for ever and ever.

he will be our guide even to the end

Psalm 48:14

Hilda and Andrew Talsma

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Renessa Visser receives her 1st place award for the *Christian Courier's* children story contest. A big thank you to all our participants.

Retirement

Covenant CRC of Woodstock, Ontario announces the retirement of our

Associate Pastor, **Rev. Gerald Hogeterp** after 41 years of service.

Rev. Hogeterp and his wife Jackie faithfully served churches in High River, First Chilliwack, Bethel Saskatoon, Calvary Ottawa & Covenant Woodstock and served as missionaries with Christian Reformed World Missions in Nigeria.

An evening of celebration is planned for **Saturday, August 28, 2010** with dinner and a program.

Rev. Hogeterp will preach his farewell sermon in a service of celebration on **August 29, 2010**. For more information, please contact the church office at woodcoveadmin@bellnet.ca

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DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

Christian Courier is published on the second and forth Mondays of the month. Deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date.

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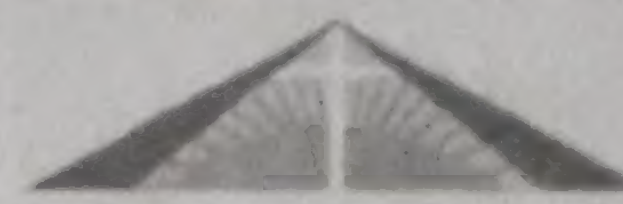
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Ph: 905-639-9054 or e-mail: rvanderwoerd@gmail.com

Only selected applicants will be contacted for interviews.

Nomad . . . continued from p. 15

Christian church:

...I think the Christian churches should begin dawa [proselytizing] exactly as Islam does. You need to compete, because you can be a powerful tool to reverse Islamization. You should start with Muslim neighborhoods in Rome. Europe is sleepwalking into disaster – cultural, ideological, and political disaster – because the authorities of the church have neglected the immigrant ghettos. (238)

In the last chapter, "Seeking God but Finding Allah," she speculates that many Muslims are seeking a God who meets the description of the Christian God, but they find Allah. She thinks that Christian leaders are wasting precious time in futile dialogues with self-appointed leaders of Islam. Her advice to them: Redirect your efforts and seek to convert as many Muslims as possible to Christianity, "introducing them to a God who rejects Holy War and who has sent his son to die for all sinners out of love for mankind." 247

Though she now is an atheist, she has high regard for Christian churches and believers who are

reaching out to Muslim immigrants in Holland – as she herself experienced that. This book is filled with insight about one of the biggest challenges facing the free West. It should be required reading for every politician and public servant involved with immigration policies.

Nomad should become a must-read in every Christian church and family. You will be moved to tears at times. Above all, you will be moved to a profound respect for the fortitude and honesty of this lady who overcame hardship and obstacles that most of us cannot even imagine in our worst nightmares. ✨

Nomad, Ayaan Hirsi Ali. Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2010, 277 pp., \$32

Reviewed by Harry Antonides (hantonides@sympatico.ca), who lives in Willowdale, Ontario.



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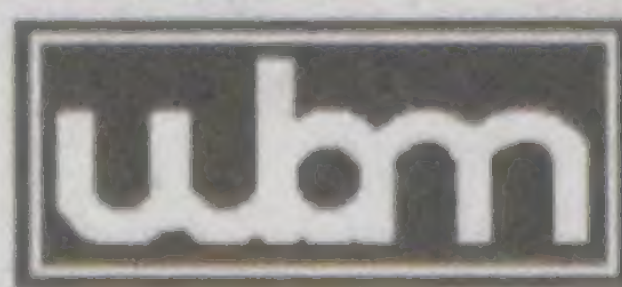
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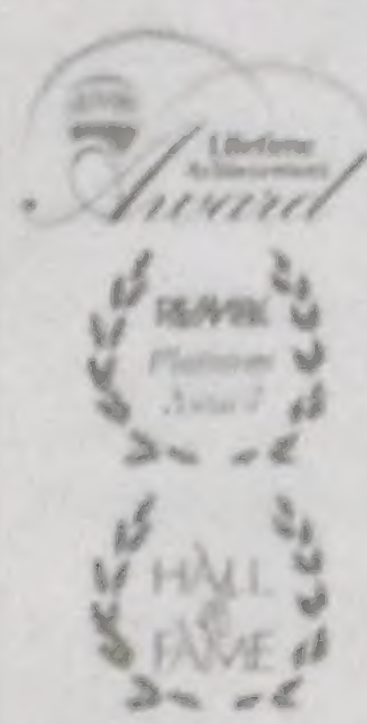
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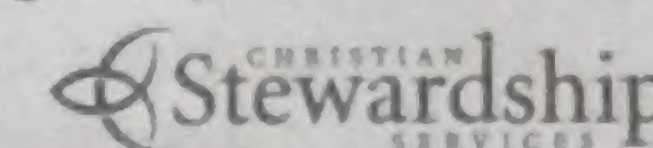
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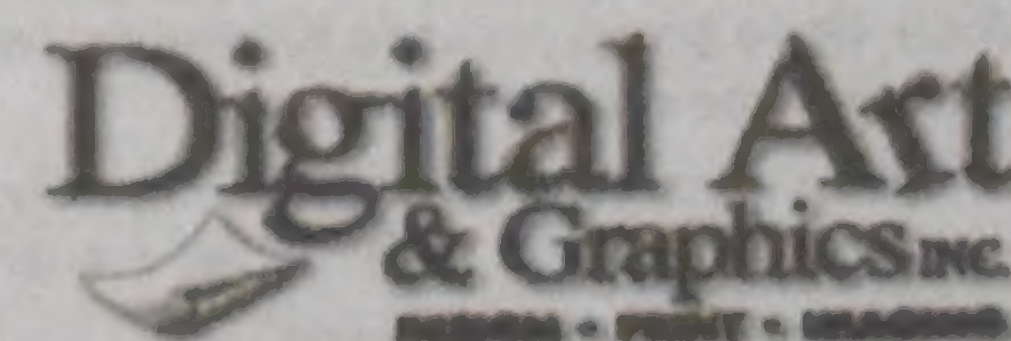
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Aug 22 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Jacob Kuntz will be preaching.

Aug 28, 29 Frisian Weekend, Tillsonburg Fairgrounds. See ad for details.

Oct 16 Diaconal Ministries invites you to attend a Day of Encouragement: come to celebrate God through worship and enjoy training in ministry and learning from others at Hamilton District Christian High, **Ancaster**. The theme for the day is "Fan the Flame." Many different workshops are being prepared for you! This day is open to everyone! After August 1, 2010: contact your deacons for more information or visit www.diaconalministries.com to register.

Oct 20 Leendert Kooij and his O.C.M.A. Choir will do a benefit concert for Eurovangelism/EuroAid at the Hebron Christian Reformed Church in **Whitby**. We invite you to join us for a great evening! Please call us at 1-866-630-6301 for more info.

Oct 23 Leendert Kooij and his O.C.M.A. Choir will do a benefit concert for Eurovangelism/EuroAid at St. George's Anglican Church in **Guelph**. We invite you to join us for a great evening! Please call us at 1-866-630-6301 for more info.

Nov 5 Christian Festival Concert 7:30 pm, Roy Thomson Hall, **Toronto**. See ad.

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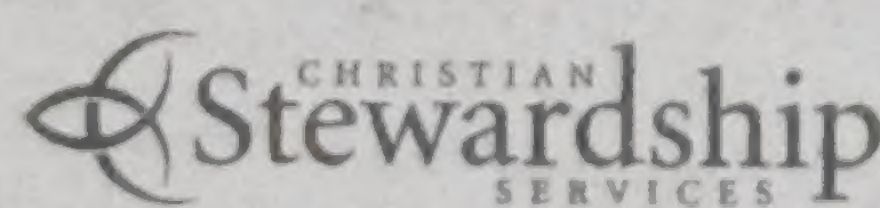
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News

The curtain is torn, the closet is open

An interview with playwright and director Richard Peters on his latest work, *David and Jonathan*

Meredith K.C. Gipson-Hoogendam

Synopsis: David and Jonathan are best friends from childhood. They've gone to the same church, acted in all the same plays in high school, and have now been accepted to the same theatre program in Toronto. David admits he no longer believes in God. Jonathan professes that he believes more strongly than he ever has . . . and that he is gay.

A mere 15 minutes after the final bows were taken, director, playwright, actor, teacher, and founder of Broken Open Theatre, Richard Peters, ushered me into his favourite Toronto sushi joint. When asked if he understood his play in terms of the adage, "art for art's sake," Peters deftly answered in the *tertium quid*: "I believe my calling is that of an artist, so what I'm doing is living out my calling. I have to write; I'm convicted to write because that's part of my identity as an artist" – a fitting response for a playwright whose latest venture, *David and Jonathan*, is all about identity.

Over miso soup and bento boxes, Peters and I delved into the background of the show, which is one of two plays directed by Peters in the 2010 Toronto Fringe Festival.

CC: Your play deals with some blatantly controversial issues – homosexuality and its relationship to the Church. Can you tell me a little bit about audience reaction thus far?

Peters: Overwhelmingly positive – so I think maybe it's not being seen by the people who need to see it. I've had a couple of pastors say, "We really need to do this at our church . . . [but] we could never do this at our church."

CC: Can you talk to me about your experience as a Christian in professional theatre?



Peters: When I "come out" as a Christian in different theatre circles, I can almost set my watch – within five minutes the conversation is going to broach homosexuality in some way. That becomes the litmus test, because really what they want to know is, *are you a hypocrite?*

CC: Were you intentionally concerned with post-modernism in the way that you chose to structure the play, or in terms of narrative?

Peters: What I was trying to do as best as I could was to communicate my own journey – my spiritual journey – as I went through theatre school. And in many ways, I am David and I am Jonathan, because I was so close to following in David's footsteps and saying, *forget the church; this is*

stupid and unworkable and unreal. And the only way that I was able to take the path that Jonathan took is that I was able to make the postmodern jump. That was hard – it didn't happen fully in university; it happened

when I left and got involved in a Christian theatre company here in Toronto [Brookstone Theatre]. We are in a different place than we were 100 years ago, where we understand faith in terms of faith, not knowledge – belief, not facts – because it's the stories we tell that dictate the way we live.

Review: Christian or not, it is hard to deny the truth of these compelling narratives. Near the end of the show, Jonathan performs a heart-shattering a cappella rendition of the Christian worship song, "Mighty to Save," for his culminating drama project. Shortly afterward, he tells David that he has decided to abandon theatre for seminary. Jonathan's heartfelt ardour for God is met by David's scorn. Although a comfortable (if not ironic) *deus ex machina* conclusion would be far more palatable for the faint of heart, Peters does not grant us such comfort. Instead, seconds before the stage goes to black our retinas are burned with the final image of David's fist, high in the air, as he yells "*They will crucify you!*" to a departing Jonathan. This emotionally tectonic moment between Doubting-Thomas David and Christ figure Jonathan mirrors the play's treatment of the dialogue between faith, sexuality, art, and art's most potent muse, uncertainty. If all goes well, Peters hopes to adapt *David and Jonathan* from a fifty-minute to a ninety-minute show in the next couple of years. We'll be waiting. ➤

Meredith lives in unintentional community with her husband and their two wily canines in the swirling vortex of Southwestern Ontario.



Odds and Trends

Bomb-sniffing plants

A Danish research company called Aresa has genetically modified (GM) a tobacco plant to identify buried land mines. The plant changes from green to red when its roots touch nitrogen dioxide leached from underground explosives. Researchers scatter seeds from a plane and return after ten weeks, once the plants have matured, to look for the red leaves that signify danger. "Usually tobacco plants only produce this pigment in their flowers," a news release explains, "but in the GM plants the presence of a particular compound in the soil will also induce pigment production in the leaves, resulting in red plants."

It's a welcome solution to a worldwide problem – the UN estimates that 68 countries harbour more than 110 million active land mines. Discovering and removing the mines has typically been expensive, labour-intensive and dangerous work. Approximately 20,000 people are injured or killed annually by abandoned land mines, which gives the tobacco plant – usually condemned as harmful to your health – the chance to save lives for a change. Researchers chose tobacco because it is "more robust, contains larger biological mass, does not have the same need for irrigation, can stand heavy rain falls and grows naturally under [many] climatic conditions where landmine fields are present," said Steen Thaarup, CEO of Aresa.

A trio of twins at Canadian CRC



Although the most recent survey of Christian Reformed congregations in North America shows that only one in three households has young children or teens, a CRC church in Barrie, Ontario may be bucking that trend. Within six months, three sets of twins were born to members of First CRC in Barrie, putting some strain on the baptism schedule over the holidays.

Aaron and Carrissa Geertsema were excited to welcome Justin and Cameron; Andrew and Julie Hough were happy to be blessed with Jonathan and Daniel; and Jeff and Melanee Weening were thrilled with the arrival of Raina and Ari. The line-up of infant car seats now takes up an entire wall of the church nursery.

Although there are older twins in church, the last pair to be born to members of First's congregation was over twenty years ago, making this trio of multiples even more unusual. Luckily their birthdays are spread over two calendar years, so the local Christian school teachers can rest assured that all six won't show up on the same class list.

Barrie First CRC is full of children in general. There are 38 kids under the age of three, and 140 children between ages three and eighteen. In a few short years, the new twins will be joining the wriggling mass at the front of the church during the children's message. Meanwhile, five pregnant women at First are fielding questions about the number of children they're carrying but, so far, the shower of multiple blessings seems to have slowed. All nursery co-ordinators are relieved.

Angela Reitsma Bick

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1			9	4			5	
	3	4			5			
	8			2				
		9		3	1	5	4	
				5				
	1	8	6	9		2		
				7			3	
			5			7	6	
	2			8	9			5